BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS ANNOUNCES ENHANCED DENTAL BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

BOSTON, Dec. 13, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross) today announced a market-leading expansion of its Dental Blue benefits to ensure members of all ages with mental health conditions have access to enhanced services to support their oral health.

The program benefits members with conditions such as depression and anxiety, and intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, such as Down syndrome and autism.

Under the new benefit, all commercial plan members with these conditions can enroll in the program with the help of their doctor to receive additional preventive services, such as more frequent dental cleanings and fluoride treatments, at no charge.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, people with mental health conditions may have difficulty maintaining daily dental care and accessing treatment, and those taking medications for mental health conditions may experience dry mouth, which can increase the risk of tooth decay and cavities.

In addition, a study in the Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability reports that people with an intellectual disability had poorer oral health, including more cavities, tooth extractions and gum inflammation, than the general population.

"We're offering this enhanced benefit because these and other studies have shown that patients with mental health conditions and intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are at a higher risk for oral health conditions," *said* Blue Cross' Executive Director of Professional Services Dr. Bob Lewando, a periodontist. *"Routine services are critical as we seek to support better health outcomes for all our members."*

Blue Cross currently offers expanded dental benefits to members with diabetes, heart disease, stroke, oral cancer, Sjogren's Syndrome and women who are pregnant. These conditions can put patients at higher risk for developing oral health conditions, and these benefits can help members manage oral health complications related to their medical condition.

To make pediatric dental care more affordable for members, Blue Cross also is among the first in the market to cover dental services at no cost for children under 13, including fillings and pediatric crowns. This new benefit applies to fully insured accounts with 51+ employees. Members can visit MyBlue to see their full list of covered services.

"We want to remove economic barriers to kids getting the dental treatments they need now so those issues don't snowball into more serious conditions in the future," Lewando said.

Blue Cross' dental plan reached a new milestone of more than 1 million members in early 2023.

Additional information on Dental Blue is available here.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.org) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable and equitable health care with an unparalleled consumer experience. Consistent with our promise to always put our members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

SOURCE Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc.

For further information: Kelsey Pearse, kelsey.pearse@bcbsma.com