

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

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In 2000 the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts engaged in discussions about how to address the challenges faced by the state's growing number of uninsured, low-income residents. The outcome was to create an independently governed, nonprofit organization that would support the expansion of health care access through research, education, policy work, and grants to community organizations. The following year, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMA Foundation) was established with an initial endowment of \$55 million.

Program Information: The mission of BCBSMA Foundation is to expand access to health care for low-income and vulnerable people in the commonwealth. To that end, the foundation collaborates with public and private organizations to broaden health coverage and reduce barriers to care through grants, research, and policy initiatives. Specific priority areas include access to coverage and care, affordability, behavioral health, and social equity and health.

► Financial Information:

Total Assets: \$111 million (FY 2014)

Amount Dedicated to Health-Related Grants: \$3.5 million (FY14)

► Special Initiatives and/or Representative Health and Human Services Grants:

- **Fostering Effective Integration** – BCBSMA Foundation's newest grant program, Fostering Effective Integration, funds one year of program support to behavioral health and primary care integration programs. Grants averaging \$130,000 were made to 10 organizations experienced in effectively integrating services and prepared to participate in an in-depth assessment of their experiences. The foundation will use this year of assessment to inform a longer-term investment intended to develop and promulgate promising practices (\$1.3 million).
- **Connecting Consumers with Care** – A long-time foundation program, Connecting Consumers with Care provides grants of up to two years for Massachusetts health care organizations to help consumers enroll in and maintain access to coverage and to educate and equip consumers to become more self-sufficient in navigating their health coverage and care. This program has had measurable results in increasing understanding among low-income consumers about using the health care system (\$640,000).
- **Strengthening the Voice for Access** – With the goal of contributing to a strong and stable consumer health advocacy community, Strengthening the Voice for Access provides grants of up to two years for general operating support to Massachusetts advocacy organizations whose mission and

activities focus on promoting the health care interests of low-income Massachusetts residents (\$670,000).

- **Policy and Research Grant: Community-Based Models for Coordinating Care for Persons with Substance Use Disorders** – This grant funded a project, which is analyzing community-based approaches for coordinating care for patients with substance use disorders (SUD) and identifying those models that appear most effective in accomplishing care coordination. By assessing different care coordination models, insight will be provided into the relative efficacy of various community-based approaches for engaging and coordinating services for patients with SUDs (\$148,880).
- **Social Equity and Health Special Initiative Grant: Community Servings** – Community Servings (CS) is a nonprofit food and nutrition program for individuals and families living with chronic illness in Massachusetts. CS launched the Food is Medicine Campaign, a policy initiative aiming to establish medically tailored meals (MTMs) as a reimbursable benefit under new payment and delivery models. With foundation support, CS published *Food as Medicine: Medically Tailored Home-Delivered Meals Can Improve Health Outcomes for People with Critical and Chronic Disease*. It reported that patients who received MTMs experienced enhanced physical and psychological health outcomes, improved weight management, medication adherence and absorption, and decreased hospitalizations (\$50,000).

Public/Private Partnerships:

"Foundations can play important roles as catalysts for change in our health care system, and they can also serve as important links between government policymakers and health care delivery systems. By joining forces and using our complementary strengths, such as a private foundation's flexibility on timing and resources and the government's ability to directly effect policy change, we can successfully collaborate to maximize our impact."

Audrey Shelto
President

