

2023 HEALTHCARE PRIORITIES

Accelerating the Future of Healthcare, Together

As 2023 commences, there are many challenges and opportunities facing the health care system. Working together, we are poised to accelerate the future of healthcare. From Blue Cross' perspective, important themes requiring our collective attention include Affordability, Mental Health, Virtual Care and Equity.

Affordability

2023 trends are rising, driven by provider price increases, which are twice what they were 5 years ago as a result of both inflation and increases in the cost of labor exacerbated by health care worker shortages. Drug costs are rising, too, and represent more than 20% of total spend for many employers, almost entirely driven by expensive specialty drugs. Blue Cross is focused on delivering on our portfolio of affordability initiatives to manage trend – from provider negotiations and medical management to our work on specialty pharmacy purchasing and using advanced analytics to combat ever increasing levels of fraud, waste and abuse. Specifically:

- Blue Cross will continue to leverage our history and leadership in value-based payments. The continuous flow of innovations that have built upon the foundation of our Alternative Quality Contract are driving value-based contracts designed for smaller physician groups. We are also leaning into new models for specialty care, virtual care offerings, and more
- In pursuing new payment models and ongoing negotiations, we will work together with our health system partners – balancing their ongoing financial challenges with the necessary focus on affordability
- We are addressing traditional drug costs through our transition to CVS (expected to achieve savings of 10–15%), and specialty drug costs through two recently launched initiatives that leverage the power of the Blue system -- Evio and Synergie Medication Collective
 - Evio is a company we co-own with four other Blue Cross plans that launched in 2021. Evio generated savings of more than \$20 million in 2022 on just five specialty drugs. Evio is also using advanced analytics to develop value-based payment models and medical policies that hold the promise to increase access AND affordability of specialty drugs by doing a better job of understanding who benefits from what drugs at a much more granular level of detail
 - Blue Cross recently announced an even larger group purchasing organization called Synergie Medication Collective. Combining the purchasing power of nearly all the Blue Cross plans nationwide and representing 100 million lives, Synergie will be the largest purchaser in the country

For more information → [BLUE CROSS LAUNCHES SYNERGIE MEDICATION COLLECTIVE](#)

Mental Health

Blue Cross has experienced a 100% increase in outpatient mental health visits since 2019. As the need for mental health services continues to grow, access to convenient and affordable care is critical. By expanding and diversifying our mental health network, we're ensuring that our members are able to find and receive the high-quality care that they need, when they need it. Blue Cross' mental health provider network has grown by nearly

46% over the last five years and includes several national mental health provider groups to expand access to care for our members amid the concurrent surge in demand and shortage of supply. Agreements from these providers to reserve capacity for our members have significantly reduced wait times.

Another element of our efforts includes expanding our network of specialized providers for conditions like OCD or pediatric mental health, which can be incredibly hard to find. Our network of specialty providers has increased 33%. We've also contracted with primary mental health groups to help match members to clinicians who are most appropriate for their needs and to more seamlessly schedule appointments. To further assist members with navigating the system, we are combining virtual tools that guide members to some of these options alongside a dedicated team of Mental Health Advocates that offer hands on support when needed.

For more information →

- [MENTAL HEALTH VISITS DOUBLED SINCE START OF PANDEMIC, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS DATA REVEALS](#)
- [BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS EXPANDS OPTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE](#)
- [BLUE CROSS ENHANCES PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS FOR POPULAR MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PPO AND HMO PLANS AND OFFERS PLANS WITH \\$0 MONTHLY PREMIUMS](#)

Virtual Care

More consumers are using virtual care and experiencing its benefits, including greater convenience and affordability. In addition to virtual services available through WellConnection, Blue Cross now provides access to two primary care practices offering the comprehensive virtual primary care models. These providers go beyond traditional primary care to help members take control of their health in a way that's convenient and fits their lifestyle.

Eligible members can choose their designated virtual primary care provider (PCP) through either Carbon Health or Firefly Health. Each of these providers offers comprehensive virtual primary care with integrated mental health and access to in-person care with in-network providers when needed. The virtual PCP model offers an enhanced experience at lower cost for members, while also including full access to the member's Blue Cross Blue Shield provider network for in-person care navigation.

For more information → [BCBSMA TO LAUNCH NEW VIRTUAL PRIMARY CARE OPTION](#)

Equity

Inequities in health weaken our communities and our economy. Equity has been a core pillar at Blue Cross for many years and it's a driving principle in our culture and values. We have met a unique moment in time with bold and decisive action that is designed to push for a scale of change we haven't seen before.

In 2021, we became the first health plan in the country to collect data on racial inequities in health care from our members and clinical partners. The data revealed racial and ethnic inequities in many areas of patient care. In partnership with the clinicians in our network, we're using that data to make meaningful change and to work toward the shared goal of eliminating racial disparities in the care Blue Cross members receive. We are also the first health plan in Massachusetts - and among the first in the nation - to create payment contracts incorporating equity measures (differences in the quality of care across racial and ethnic groups) that reward clinicians for eliminating racial and ethnic inequities in care.

The new contracts will initially focus on measuring and rewarding equity in care in several clinical areas where inequities have been identified, including colorectal cancer screenings, blood pressure control and care for diabetes. Additional categories will be added as the payment model evolves and our goal is to engage as many physicians and hospitals in equity improvement as we can.

For more information → [BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS SIGNS GROUNDBREAKING VALUE-BASED PAYMENT CONTRACTS INCORPORATING EQUITY MEASURES](#)

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