



BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama

Media Release
January 15, 2019

Contact: Koko Mackin
205-220-2713

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama Supporting Avenues of Care in Rural Alabama

BIRMINGHAM, AL – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama announces several efforts to expand access to quality and innovative care in rural areas of Alabama.

Blue Cross is very focused on rural healthcare, and in particular, rural hospitals since they serve as key providers and health resources to our customers. While we know Medicare and Medicaid customers constitute the majority of rural hospital patients, Blue Cross actively engages rural providers in order to maintain efficient and quality healthcare for our members throughout Alabama.

“We believe every Alabamian should have access to high quality healthcare,” said Tim Vines, President and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama. “Blue Cross remains dedicated to working with physicians, hospitals, and other providers. This collaboration is beneficial for our members and Alabamians by providing them additional access to quality healthcare in their communities.”

Blue Cross realizes the importance of rural hospitals in the delivery of quality care and continues to offer them needed support and payment incentives in an ever changing healthcare environment:

- Incentive opportunities include an Enhanced Patient Care program which reinforces hospitals for implementing innovative solutions to improve care. These innovative approaches are shared so that other hospitals can benefit from known best practices.
- Additional support is provided through Blue Cross assisted health fair events which provide members with an opportunity to receive recommended wellness screenings and education at their local hospital.
- Blue Cross is also partnering with University of Alabama at Birmingham on a United States Department of Agriculture grant to establish Telemedicine carts in rural hospitals. This enhanced technology will allow patients in rural areas improved access to medical specialists. The grant was successful and brought much needed funds to help improve access in rural Alabama. Telemedicine provides care to patients through an electronic audio and video telecommunications system that is secure and HIPAA compliant. Since the Telemedicine system is real-time and interactive, the physician receives the same information as if their patient’s exam was conducted in person.
- In 2019, Blue Cross will begin piloting a facility urgent care program in several rural hospitals. This program acts as an urgent care site which means lower out-of-pocket costs for members and additional opportunities for rural hospitals to offer healthcare services locally.

- Blue Cross is investing in the future of its Primary Care Physician Network by making available \$7.8 million in medical scholarships, over a five-year period. The scholarship opportunity is for medical students agreeing to practice as primary care or behavioral health physicians in an underserved area of Alabama.

“I’m hoping to go back to my hometown of Daphne, Alabama and give back to the children there. I know there are not a lot of pediatricians there, so hopefully I’ll be able to help with that need,” said Perrin Windham, University of South Alabama medical student and scholarship recipient. “I really want to thank Blue Cross for their support and for giving me this opportunity to give back to my community.”

- In December 1, 2018, Blue Cross began paying for a new chronic care management pilot that will support improved health outcomes and cost savings for members. Patients can sign up for this service through their Primary Care Select physician if they have two qualifying chronic care conditions. This pilot will allow members in rural areas to receive needed chronic care management access to proactively manage their health. These conditions include:

- Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia
- Asthma
- Cardiovascular disease (including congestive heart failure)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Coronary artery disease; and
- Hypertension

Blue Cross remains focused on ensuring our members continue to have access to quality, innovative and affordable healthcare.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama has insured Alabamians for over 82 years. Blue Cross offers coverage plans to corporations, individuals and the senior market. For more information about Blue Cross, visit AlabamaBlue.com. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) for more up-to-date information.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.