

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Processes 1 Million Telehealth Claims in 9 Weeks

Health plan adds more than 400 mental health clinicians to network to help meet demand

BOSTON, May 21, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#) ("Blue Cross") announced today that it has processed more than one million telehealth claims in the nine weeks since changing its policy to expand coverage for telephone and virtual visits at no cost to members during the COVID-19 crisis. In February 2020, Blue Cross received approximately 200 telehealth claims per day – today, the health plan is receiving more than 38,000 per day. Blue Cross is reimbursing telehealth services at the same rate as in-person visits for the duration of the Massachusetts public health emergency.

"We're experiencing a revolution when it comes to telehealth use, both for medical and mental health care," said Andrew Dreyfus, Blue Cross' president and CEO. "It's likely that this kind of growth would otherwise have taken years, based on the trends we saw before the COVID-19 crisis."

Nearly half the telehealth visits since the crisis began have been for mental health services, including psychotherapy. To help meet this unprecedented demand, Blue Cross has added more than 400 new mental health clinicians to its network since March 1 via its [expedited emergency credentialing and enrollment process](#). This brings the total number of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, family therapists and other mental health clinicians – most of whom are now offering telehealth services – to nearly 15,000.

"It's encouraging that so many of our members are seeking and getting the help they need during this incredibly challenging time," said Dr. Ken Duckworth, Blue Cross' senior medical director for behavioral health. "It's clear that the mental health impact of the pandemic will be felt for quite some time, even after we start the transition to a new normal. Mental health support will continue to be critical as our response to the virus evolves."

Blue Cross has taken several additional steps to expedite access to care and testing related to COVID-19 for duration of the Massachusetts declared public health emergency, including waiving member cost share (co-pays, co-insurance and deductibles), prior authorizations and referrals for medically necessary COVID-19 testing, counseling, vaccines (when available) and treatment and supportive care, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines.

Blue Cross and its Foundation have also committed more than \$3.35 million in financial support to COVID-19 relief efforts, along with a pledge of pro bono and in-kind support surpassing \$4.68 million in value for a total community investment of \$9.7 million. Blue Cross has re-deployed more than 120 employees to address critical community health needs through the [Community Tracing Collaborative](#), Boston Hope field hospital, and a partnership with FLIK – the company's food service partner – and nonprofit [Lovin' Spoonfuls](#) to make and distribute up to 5,000 meals per week across Greater Boston.

For more information on how Blue Cross is responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, please [click here](#).

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable 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](#).



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