

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS' NUDGE UNIT TURNS TO BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TO HELP IMPROVE MEMBERS' HEALTH

State's leading private health plan is among first in nation to launch a Nudge Unit to empower members and clinicians to improve health care decision making

BOSTON, May 26, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#) (Blue Cross) wants to make it easier for members to make better health care choices. The company's recently created Nudge Unit uses behavioral insights to present information in new ways that can lead to improved decision making and better health outcomes. Nudges - also known as choice architecture - change the way information is presented and choices are offered, making it easier for a consumer to make a better decision.

"One of the most effective things you can do in health care is encourage people to make better choices," said Mark Friedberg, MD, senior vice president of performance measurement and improvement at Blue Cross. "The guiding principle behind our Nudge Unit is that better decisions exist - and that clinicians and members are likely to make those decisions if information is presented in a slightly different way. We want to make it easy to make optimal decisions, in a way that respects rather than limits freedom of choice."

Blue Cross is one of the first health plans in the country to launch a Nudge Unit, as recently detailed in a [HealthAffairs blog post](#). Since its launch, the Nudge Unit has deployed several interventions focused on member and clinician decisions, including:



- Revising a letter to members that accompanies at-home colorectal cancer screening test kits, resulting in a 3% increase in test uptake and a net increase of approximately 500 additional screening kits returned.
- Revising letters encouraging primary care providers to order statins for their patients with diabetes. The most effective letter (containing a blank prescription form to prompt recipients to perform the desired behavior) increased statin prescriptions by nearly 14%.
- Leveraging behavioral insights to update the [MyBlue app](#) interface, making it easier for members to self-report their race and ethnicity to support the company's efforts to measure and address inequities in care. Since implementation, more than 300,000 members have provided their race and ethnicity.
- Notifying clinicians if they are outliers in their rates of prescribing certain medications and ordering certain tests. Subtle nudges like these often result in more efficient, evidence-based care for patients.

"These results show that behavioral science can achieve meaningful changes at low cost," said Dr. Michael Hallsworth, managing director at the global social purpose company Behavioural Insights Team and national expert on behavioral insights and well-being. "This is just a start - there are many other ways to help both patients and clinicians."

Blue Cross' Nudge Unit is led by Rebecca Oran, who joined Blue Cross earlier in 2022 to expand the company's use of behavioral insights. She is assisted by consultants from the Behavioral Insights Team and academic institutions. Since its inception, the Unit has deployed 53 interventions that aimed to improve members and clinician decisions.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ([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, equitable and 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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