

## Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Partners with Equity Now & Beyond to Provide Vaccine Clinics and Outreach to Local Immigrant Communities

BOSTON, July 23, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#) ("Blue Cross") today announced a partnership with Equity Now & Beyond, a collaborative of five immigrant-led organizations, to host vaccine clinics and provide educational outreach in immigrant communities across Massachusetts. The organizations will work together through the summer and fall in an effort to reduce disparities in vaccination rates.

Recent Massachusetts Department of Health data show significant gaps in vaccination rates among Black and Latino residents compared to White and Asian residents. There are also disparities in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations.

With financial support from Blue Cross, Equity Now & Beyond is hosting more than 20 vaccine clinics at local churches, schools and community centers across the state including Mattapan, Dorchester, Lynn, Brighton, Waltham, Brockton and Worcester. The clinics, staffed by physicians from local hospitals and community health centers, are organized and operated by Equity Now & Beyond's immigrant-led groups including African Community Economic Development of New England (ACEDONE), Haitian Americans United (HAU), Brazilian Women's Group, Agencia ALPHA, and the Center to Support Immigrant Organizing. In addition to the managing the clinics, volunteers from these groups help address potential barriers to vaccination among immigrant communities, including translation services, transportation support and one-on-one counseling.



"Many of Boston's African, Haitian and other Caribbean Black immigrants have particular doubts and skepticisms of the vaccine and medical establishment," said Kevin Whalen, Co-Director of Center to Support Immigrant Organizing and Coordinator of Equity Now & Beyond. "Our goal is to provide education on the COVID-19 vaccine and create an accessible environment where these communities feel safe and don't fear retribution because of their immigrant or socioeconomic status."

Blue Cross' investment will allow Equity Now & Beyond to scale its COVID-19 vaccine education programs by increasing staff and launching new communication tools to reach those who are hesitant about vaccination. The funding will also help enhance the local clinics and create an inviting space for immigrant communities by featuring cultural music and food and providing other resources including assistance with obtaining health insurance, information on tenant and worker rights and immigration counseling.

"COVID-19 highlighted the longstanding inequities in health care," said Jeff Bellows, Blue Cross' vice president of corporate citizenship and public affairs. "At Blue Cross, we are committed to addressing health disparities both within our membership and the broader community. We are proud to support the grassroots efforts of Equity Now & Beyond to help promote the COVID-19 vaccines and support Massachusetts's immigrant communities."

### Below is a calendar of upcoming clinics hosted by Equity Now & Beyond:

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Town</u> | <u>Location</u>  | <u>Time</u>                |
|-------------|-------------|--|----------------------------|
| 23-Jul      | Mattapan    | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.;12 - 4 p.m. |
| 23-Jul      | Waltham     | St. Mary's Church, 133 School Street                       | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.           |
| 24-Jul      | Worcester   | First Haitian Baptist Church, 60 Ellsworth Street          | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.           |
| 25-Jul      | Lynn        | Harrington Elementary School, 21 Dexter Street             | 1 - 4 p.m.                 |
| 30-Jul      | Mattapan    | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.;12 - 4 p.m. |
| 31-Jul      | Mattapan    | Mattapan Community Health Center, 1575 Blue Hill Avenue    | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.           |
| 31-Jul      | East Boston | Paris Street Playground, 115 Paris Street                  | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.           |
| 31-Jul      | Roxbury     | Dennis Park, 138 Moreland Street                           | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.           |
| 31-Jul      | Brockton    | Brockton church  | 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.           |
| 1-Aug       | Dorchester  | Church of God, Dorchester                                  | 12 - 7 p.m.                |
| 3-Aug       | Mattapan    | BINCA High School, 100 Maxwell Street                      | 1 - 6 p.m.                 |
| 6-Aug       | Mattapan    | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.;12 - 4 p.m. |
| 7-Aug       | Waltham     | New Covenant Church, 527 Main Street                       | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.           |
| 13-Aug      | Mattapan    | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.;12 - 4 p.m. |
| 14-Aug      | Worcester   | First Haitian Baptist Church, 60 Ellsworth Street          | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.           |
| 15-Aug      | Lynn        | Harrington Elementary School, 21 Dexter Street             | 1 - 4 p.m.                 |
| 20-Aug      | Mattapan    | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.;12 - 4 p.m. |
| 21-Aug      | Brockton    | Brockton church  | 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.           |
| 22-Aug      | Dorchester  | Church of God, Dorchester                                  | 12 - 7 p.m.                |

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|--------|---------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 22-Aug | Mattapan      | Mattapan Back to School clinic                             | 1 - 5 p.m.                  |
| 24-Aug | Mattapan      | BINCA High School, 100 Maxwell Street                      | 1 - 6 p.m.                  |
| 27-Aug | Mattapan      | Immigrant Family Services Institute, 1626 Blue Hill Avenue | 8:30 - 11 a.m.; 12 - 4 p.m. |
| 11-Sep | Mattapan      | Mattapan Back to School clinic                             | 1 - 5 p.m.                  |
| 12-Sep | Brighton      | Brazilian festival, 1175 Soldiers Field Road               | 12-5 p.m.                   |
| 16-Sep | Jamaica Plain | Margarita Muniz Academy, 20 Child Street                   | 1 - 7 p.m.                  |
| 3-Oct  | Brighton      | Brazilian festival, 1175 Soldiers Field Road               | 12-5 p.m.                   |
| 7-Oct  | Jamaica Plain | Margarita Muniz Academy, 20 Child Street                   | 1 - 7 p.m.                  |

#### **About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts**

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

#### **About Equity Now & Beyond**

Equity Now & Beyond is a collaborative organized by the African Community Economic Development of New England (ACEDONE), Haitian Americans United (HAU), Brazilian Women's Group and Agencia ALPHA and coordinated by the Center to Support Immigrant Organizing. Together they focus on educating and promoting the Covid-19 vaccine and working for broader health and race equity in Boston's immigrant populations.

SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

For further information: Kacey Brister, [Kacey.Brister@bcbsma.com](mailto:Kacey.Brister@bcbsma.com)

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