



Creating the Foundation for Healthier Communities



the foundation | BlueCross and
BlueShield of Minnesota



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross
and Blue Shield Association



What is a healthy community?

One where everyone feels connected and respected. Every child has a healthy start — a caring family, access to early learning opportunities and quality health care. The air, water and soil are clean. Homes and neighborhoods are safe. Newcomers, seeking a better life, are welcome and enrich community life for all. Public, private and nonprofit organizations work together for the common good. Sound impossible? We don't think so.

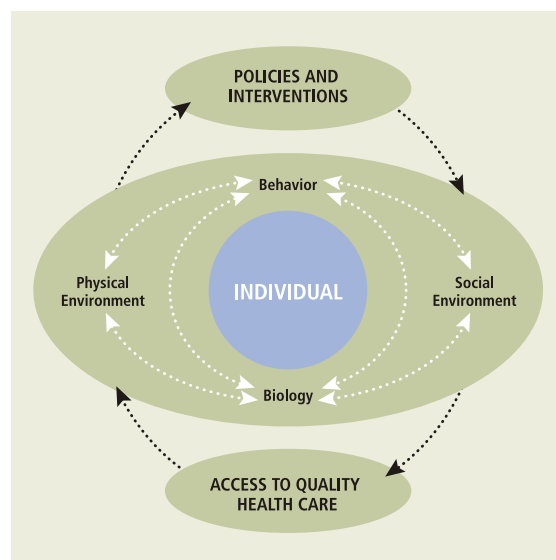
Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

World Health Organization

Our definition of health

Health is the product of a variety of critical influences, including biology, family history, lifestyle behavior, and access to health care. Health is also determined by the economic, social and environmental conditions of where we live and work. The quality of the natural environment, affordable housing, education and supportive social networks are critical to health as well.

To have the greatest impact, we need to look beyond today's medical care system and consider the powerful effects of social, economic and environmental factors on community health. We must work across sectors — engaging public, private and nonprofit groups to create healthier communities for all.



Source: Healthy People 2010; www.healthypeople.gov

Closing the gap on health disparities

Interventions to improve access to medical care and reduce behavioral risk have only limited potential for success if the larger societal and economic context in which people live is not improved.

Institute of Medicine

Minnesota is widely regarded to be the healthiest state in the nation.¹ While our state ranks high on traditional public health indicators, as we pull back the layers of health data by race, ethnicity, income or education, an alarming pattern of health disparities is revealed. Overall, populations of color experience shorter life spans, higher rates of infant mortality, higher incidences of cancer and other diseases, and poorer general health.

People living in poverty have more difficulty accessing health care services, have less access to healthy foods and are more likely to live in deteriorating housing or unsafe neighborhoods where exposure to crime, and air, water and soil pollutants is higher.

Social, economic and environmental factors affect health. For example:

- Quality early childhood care and education help improve resilience, social competence and school readiness — but less than half of incoming kindergartners in Minnesota have the skills necessary for early learning success.²
- Affordable housing is important to health — but 10 percent of Minnesota households are paying more than 50 percent of their incomes for housing costs.³
- Minnesotans have a national reputation for caring for one another.⁴ People are healthiest when they feel safe, supported and connected to others in their families, neighborhoods, workplaces and communities. Yet the Twin Cities region is among the most racially and socioeconomically segregated metropolitan areas in the U.S.⁵
- Our health is tied to the purity of our state's natural resources — but widespread contamination of our state's waters has led to a statewide advisory limiting the number of game fish that people should eat. This has the greatest impact on people who rely on fish as an affordable food source or for whom fish are culturally important, including low-income people, Native Americans, Southeast Asians and African Americans.⁶

¹America's Health Rankings 2005, United Health Foundation

²So ... How are the children: A report on the school readiness of Minneapolis Children, Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, 2004

³U.S. Census, 2000

⁴State of Caring Index, United Way, November 2000

⁵Mind the Gap — Socioeconomic Disparities in the Twin Cities Region, The Itasca Project, 2005

⁶Clean Water, Safe Fish, Healthy Kids, Mercury-Free Minnesota, 2005



Such factors help explain why health disparities exist in our nation's healthiest state. Yet there is hope for a better state of health for all Minnesotans. By looking "upstream" — beyond health care today — and by empowering communities to work collaboratively to improve social conditions that determine health, we can eliminate health disparities, and truly call Minnesota the healthiest state in the nation.

Initiatives focus on four key areas

Through research, consultation with health leaders, and conversations with communities statewide, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation has identified four critical areas for improving community health in Minnesota: early childhood development, housing, social connectedness and the environment. These health determinants form the basis of our work.

Health and early childhood development

Healthy childhood development — infancy through age five — is critical for emotional well-being, school readiness and social skills and sets the stage for a healthy, productive adulthood.

Health and housing

Living in a safe neighborhood that offers affordable housing is linked to better health, especially for children.

Health and social connectedness

Healthy communities have strong social networks and support systems that bond people together. Social connectedness is especially important to the mental health and healthy adjustment of new Americans.

Health and the environment

The quality of our environment affects our health. Children are especially vulnerable to environmental factors due to their rapid growth and smaller size.

Our state will be healthier if more Minnesotans have a healthy childhood, live in safe and affordable homes and communities, and feel socially connected.



In addition to grantmaking, we help organizations forge community partnerships, share learning, and develop greater capacity and effectiveness.

Commitment for the long-term

Sustainable change requires a long-term commitment. Our 10-year, multimillion dollar investment combines grantmaking with Blue Cross Foundation operating programs in four strategic initiatives:

Healthy Together: Creating Community with New Americans

This grantmaking initiative focuses on the intersection of health, immigrant integration and social adjustment. The Blue Cross Foundation is providing grants for projects that address social adjustment and mental health, strengthen the capacity of immigrant-led organizations and their attention to health, and foster exchanges between newcomers and the receiving community. Healthy Together bridges our upstream health focus with a former priority to help people with unique cultural needs navigate the health care system.

Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities

This grantmaking initiative engages community health, early childhood development, housing and environmental organizations and other community partners to improve children's health and well-being. The initiative builds on lessons learned from an earlier initiative — Growing Up Healthy in Minnesota, which increased preventive care for children, especially those from ethnic and minority communities.

Public awareness and policy support

This initiative will build public awareness and policy support for the social, environmental and economic conditions that promote health.

Leadership development

This initiative will develop, train, recognize and support leaders who help create healthier communities.

Visit www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation for more information, including eligibility and application guidelines.

Funding process and procedures

The Blue Cross Foundation has two primary funding opportunities through Healthy Together: Creating Community with New Americans and Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities.

For detailed information on eligibility and the funding process, visit

www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation.

How to apply: A three-step process

At the start of an annual funding cycle, potential applicants are encouraged to contact Blue Cross Foundation staff to discuss a project idea and the alignment of the proposed project with our funding priorities. Funding cycles are announced at www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation. Applicants next submit a letter of inquiry. Those whose projects appear to best meet the initiative's goals will be invited to prepare full proposals. Foundation staff review all proposals and conduct site visits with finalists. The Blue Cross Foundation's Board of Directors makes final funding decisions.

Because the volume of requests typically exceeds available funding, we cannot fund all proposals that fall within our guidelines.

Eligibility

The Blue Cross Foundation invites a wide range of organizations to apply for funding, including community-based organizations; faith-based organizations; state, county and municipal agencies; tribal governments and agencies; professional associations or collaboratives; and policy and research organizations. Applicants must be located in Minnesota or serve Minnesotans. Eligible applicants include units of government as well as organizations designated as nonprofit under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

For a detailed list of activities and programs we are unable to fund, visit www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation.

As a statewide corporate health philanthropy, the Blue Cross Foundation seeks to support the work of organizations throughout Minnesota that share our priorities. For this reason, we do not typically award more than one grant to an organization during a given time period.

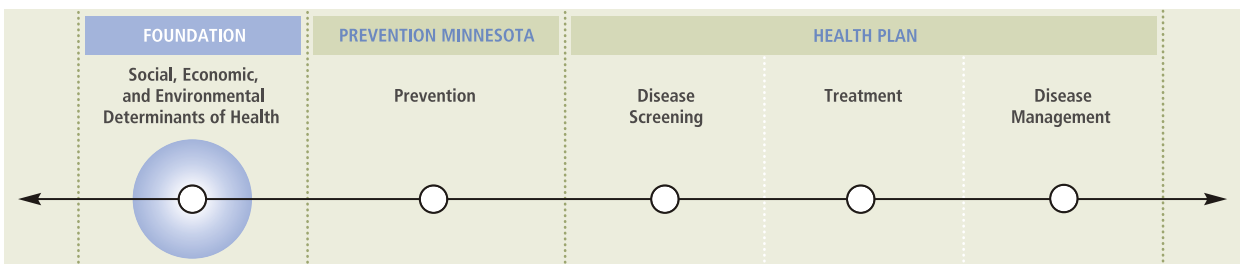
A history of corporate social responsibility

A focus on key social determinants of health reflects the Foundation's purpose to look beyond health care today for ideas that create healthier communities tomorrow.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota established the Blue Cross Foundation in 1986 to formalize the company's philanthropic presence. Social responsibility is at the root of Blue Cross' nonprofit charter, "to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota."

From its inception, the Foundation has operated as a philanthropy that addresses health improvement beyond the scope of traditional health plan operations and services, reaching a statewide population broader than the Blue Cross membership.

Today, the Foundation is the state's largest health grantmaker with assets dedicated to improving the health of Minnesotans. It is governed by a board of leaders from Blue Cross and the community.



Health across the spectrum

Blue Cross and its family of companies focus on every stage of health management. Prevention Minnesota is Blue Cross' initiative to tackle the root causes of heart disease and cancer throughout Minnesota. And part of Blue Cross' nonprofit mission is to advocate for public policies that ensure access to affordable, high-quality health care for members.

As the philanthropic arm of Blue Cross, the Foundation has a unique opportunity to focus "upstream" on social determinants of health to improve the health of entire communities.



Building on past programs

Over our 20-year history, the Blue Cross Foundation has provided \$20 million to improve the health of communities. Past grant projects and programs include:

- **Growing Up Healthy in Minnesota** A statewide initiative that reduced barriers and increased preventive care for children and teens from foreign-born populations, tribal communities and communities of color.
- **Critical Links** An ongoing program that has promoted the training, use, development and sustainable support of community health workers in our state, now part of Healthy Together.
- **Helping people with unique cultural needs navigate the health care system** Grantmaking that improved access to health services among immigrant populations and people of color, leading to improved health care cultural competence and better health for all.
- **Minnesota Health Access Study** In partnership with the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health, state policy decisions have been informed for over a decade by determining trends in health coverage.
- **New Times, New Tools** An initiative that improved organizational effectiveness and built the capacity of health service organizations in Greater Minnesota.
- **Regional immunization registries** In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health to form the Minnesota Immunization Information Connection, a program that links providers, parents, public health agencies and schools with information to protect children from preventable disease.
- **Minnesota *Decides*SM: A Blueprint for Tobacco Reduction** A program that established a comprehensive statewide plan and helped change the social environment for high school students to reduce tobacco use.

The Blue Cross Foundation has entered into a partnership with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to support the development and implementation of a statewide curriculum for community health workers (CHWs). CHWs are bicultural and bilingual individuals who typically are recruited from the communities they serve.

About the Blue Cross Foundation

The Blue Cross Foundation's purpose is to look beyond health care today for ideas that create healthier communities tomorrow. By addressing key social, economic and environmental factors that determine health — beyond genes, lifestyle and access to health care — we work to improve community health long-term and close the health gap that affects many Minnesotans. The Foundation has awarded \$20 million since it was established 20 years ago.

The Foundation is a member of and subscribes to the principles and practices of the Minnesota Council on Foundations.

Working in partnership

We are dedicated to working collaboratively with others in the community. Fulfilling the vision of healthier communities for all Minnesotans will require the participation of many organizations and individuals. We're committed to sharing the lessons we learn along the way.

Our staff

Jocelyn Ancheta
Program Officer

Joan Cleary
Associate Director

Janet Jablonske
Foundation Coordinator

Daniel Johnson
Executive Director

Julie Lee
*Program Communications
Consultant*

Regina Prather
Administrative Assistant

Cathy Sever
Operations Manager

Lisa Simer
Program Officer

Contact us at:
(651) 662-3950
1-866-812-1593 (toll free)
foundation@bluecrossmn.com



the foundation | BlueCross and
BlueShield of Minnesota



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross
and Blue Shield Association

M459
P.O. Box 64560
St. Paul, MN 55164-0560

www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation