



Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities

Creating Healthier Communities for Children

the foundation | BlueCross and
BlueShield of Minnesota



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and Blue Shield Association



A healthy start is just the beginning

The birth of a baby changes lives — for family, the community and potentially, the world. Every new life represents hope and infinite possibility.

From birth to age five, children develop language and cognitive capabilities, learn how to form emotional attachments, develop appropriate behavior and undergo virtually all the “wiring” that will shape their future. As they begin to experience their environment, their developing brains make important connections that will have a lifelong impact on their ability to grow and be healthy. Nurturing families and communities foster this growth. On the other hand, negative or unhealthy early influences can cause harm for life.

What does it mean to grow up healthy?

Every child deserves to grow up healthy. Some factors that contribute to health are obvious — caring adults, nutritious food, timely medical care, plenty of exercise and sleep. But to have their best shot at being healthy, children need more than that.

They need high-quality early learning opportunities that prepare them for school. With them, children are 40 percent less likely to need special education or to be held back a grade.¹

Children need a healthy environment. Their rapid growth and smaller size make them more vulnerable to environmental threats. Pound for pound, kids breathe more air, drink more fluids, and eat more food than do adults.²

They also need safe, affordable housing. Safe housing helps protect children from many health conditions, including asthma, anemia, lead poisoning, mold allergies and respiratory infections. Affordable housing promotes stability. Children in stable housing situations are less likely to change schools frequently, perform better in school and have better prospects for educational achievement later in life.³

To have truly healthy children in Minnesota, we need to direct attention and collective resources to the social, economic and environmental factors that are at the very core of their health. In doing so, we’ll have healthier kids, healthier adults and healthier communities.

Babies are born with 100 billion brain cells. When parents and other caregivers talk, sing to or play with their baby, different areas of the baby’s brain are stimulated, and connections are made. By just eight months, babies have developed trillions of these connections, and the possibilities for learning are endless.

Zero to Three: BrainWonders

¹Ready4K

²Minnesota Department of Health

³Greater Minnesota Housing Fund

Building health through partnerships

A healthy community offers children early learning opportunities, safe and affordable housing, and a clean environment in which to grow up.

Health is more than the absence of disease. It also includes the day-to-day conditions in which we live, learn, work and play.

Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities is a statewide grantmaking initiative of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation to improve the health of Minnesota's children. It is designed to help communities work across sectors in new ways to create an environment that nurtures the healthy growth and development of children under the age of five.

The program will improve children's health by supporting culturally appropriate, community-based partnerships that focus on the connections between health and early childhood development, safe and affordable housing, and the environment. Priority is given to projects that address the needs of children of color and children living in poverty. The Foundation has a special interest in projects that originate from and work with Native American communities, where significant socioeconomic and health disparities exist. Overall, populations of color experience shorter life spans, higher rates of infant mortality, higher incidences of cancer and other diseases and conditions, and poorer general health.⁴

Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities objectives

- To support the formation of cross-sectoral partnerships in selected neighborhoods, towns and/or regions, based on invited proposals
- To foster the creation of community plans by grantee organizations that identify community assets, partners, shared strategies and desired outcomes to achieve healthier communities for their youngest children and their families
- To increase the capacity of organizations and diverse community groups to work together to create healthy communities
- To foster the development, evaluation and replication of sustainable community-based models in our state that measurably improve environments for children and advance learning on ways to effectively influence social determinants of child health

⁴Office of Minority and Multicultural Health, Minnesota Department of Health



Growing Up Healthy funding available

Planning grants up to \$25,000 and implementation grants up to \$150,000 are available. Through the planning process, funded organizations and their community partners will develop a shared vision of how to improve and protect the health of children through place-based projects (neighborhood, town, region) that address health and at least two of the three determinants: early childhood education, housing and the environment.

Implementation grants for a three-year period are available upon completion of a successful community planning process. To receive an implementation grant, projects must show broad-based community support, demonstrate innovative approaches and articulate how these approaches will result in healthier communities and children.

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.

Application and proposal review process

To apply, organizations first submit a brief letter of inquiry (LOI) for a planning or implementation grant. The Foundation will notify all applicants of its determination. Specific details on the contents of LOIs can be found on www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation.

Applicants whose projects appear to best meet the initiative's goals will be invited to prepare full proposals. Foundation staff members and consultants will review the submissions, and finalists will receive site visits. The Foundation board will consider and take action on proposals from finalists.

Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities is designed to help communities work across sectors in new ways to create an environment that nurtures the healthy growth and development of young children.

For more information on letters of inquiry and the application process, visit www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation.

Measuring Success

Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities builds on experiences and learnings from an earlier grantmaking program that increased preventive care for children from ethnic and minority communities across the state.

For deadlines and detailed information on the application process, visit www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation.

Program evaluation is an important learning tool valued by the Foundation. Shared learning opportunities will enable grantees to learn from each other. An independent evaluator will work collaboratively with grantees and their project-level evaluators to develop a common evaluation plan and tools for collecting, reporting and comparing data across projects. Because building broad-based community support and partnerships are central to the success of this work, the ability of communities to implement and sustain both action plans and the partnerships over time are important measures of success.

The Foundation recognizes that building healthy communities that nurture the healthy development of children is an ongoing process. Intermediate indicators that will lead to successful long-term outcomes include:

- Stronger collaboration and working relationships to address shared goals among local residents; community agencies; faith-based groups; businesses; health, environmental, child development and housing organizations; and local government
- A better informed community that understands the link between health and early childhood care and education, housing and the physical environment
- Improved training and support systems to address cross-sectoral issues affecting children's health
- Increased availability and improved conditions of affordable housing
- Improved quality of physical environment
- Improved quality of and access to early childhood development

We believe that improving the health of Minnesota's communities will require the collective efforts of many — community members along with nonprofit, government and business sectors, working together to ensure that all our children grow up healthy.

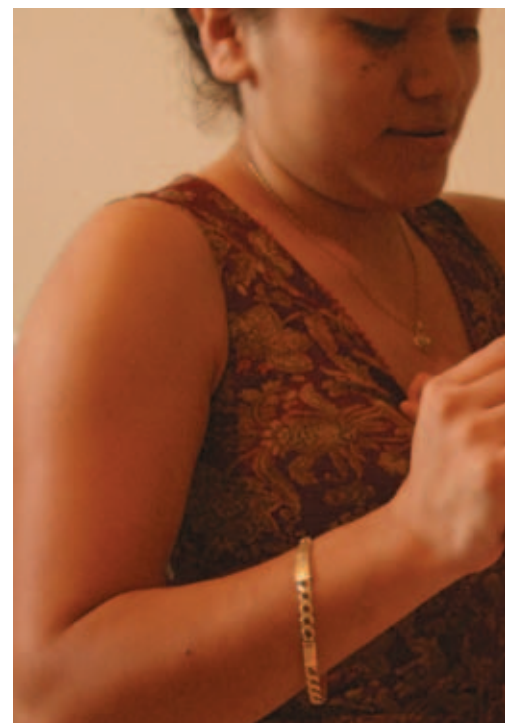


About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation

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 — the Foundation's work extends beyond the traditional reach of the health care system to improve community health long-term and close the health gap that affects many Minnesotans. Since it was established 20 years ago, the Foundation has become the state's largest grantmaking foundation to exclusively dedicate its assets to improve health in Minnesota, awarding \$20 million since 1986.

Inquiries

For more information on Growing Up Healthy: Kids and Communities, to learn about the application process or for more information on the Foundation, please visit www.bluecrossmn.com/foundation or contact us at (651) 662-3950 or toll free 1-866-812-1593.



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