

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Honors Health & Education Services, Inc. with its Third Health Care Excellence Award at Annual Quality Forum**

*Program recognized by panel of experts for improving safety and effectiveness of care*

**BOSTON – October 30, 2009** – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc. (BCBSMA) today announced that Health & Education Services, Inc. (HES), a community-based behavioral health care network in northeastern Massachusetts, was selected as the recipient of the third annual Health Care Excellence Award for its exceptional achievement in improving the safety and effectiveness of health care in Massachusetts through its Health Access and Integration Program (HAIP). The recognition comes with a \$100,000 award. The HAIP manages the overall health of individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) – a shift from a focus on symptom management and episodic care.

A study conducted by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, found that people with a SMI die 25 years earlier than their counterparts in the general population, and that three out of every five people with SMI die due to a preventable health condition.

HAIP addresses this problem by integrating a Nurse Practitioner (NP) in the mental health outpatient setting. The NP provides primary health care to patients diagnosed with SMI to treat problems such as obesity, hypertension, allergies, high cholesterol, and diabetes, among other conditions.

HES achieved profound results through the HAIP initiative, including:

- Increased access to routine primary care by 70%
- Reduced emergency department utilization by 42%
- Decreased psychiatric hospitalizations and cost by 75%, as compared to those not in HAIP

“Affordability continues to be at the epicenter of the national and statewide debate on the future of health care,” said Cleve Killingsworth, CEO of BCBSMA. “Organizations like Health & Education Services are integral in transforming the health care delivery system. HES’ Health Access and Integration Program is an inspirational model for improving the health of patients with serious mental illness while helping to reduce health care costs.”

Those who received primary care through this program were also more likely to believe a professional could help with medical problems, and to believe diet, exercise and avoidance of substances such as tobacco and alcohol, would positively affect their health. Individuals were also less likely to think that adverse medical events would occur in the future. These factors reflect a shift in self-empowerment that may prove critical to making health care truly accessible to people living with and recovering from SMI in a cost-effective way.

“HES’ Health Access and Integration Program promotes a universal sense of health care empowerment to an underserved population,” said Paul O’Shea, President and CEO of Health & Education Services, Inc. Through this program we have witnessed the power of rehabilitation and recovery, evidenced in both medical and psychiatric service utilization and cost. “We’ve presented this program nationally and internationally in many venues over the years, but it is by far the greatest honor to be acknowledged by our own colleagues in Massachusetts.”

The Health Care Excellence Award was presented today at BCBSMA's quality forum, *Jumping In: Learning from CEOs About Driving Health Care Quality Improvement*, which explored the critical elements of increasing health care affordability through improved quality of care.

HES was chosen among a competitive group of health care delivery organizations and employer applicants by a committee of local and national health experts.

**Finalist Recognition:**

Two organizations were also honored as finalists for their outstanding work. EMC Corporation, an international leader in Information Management and Infrastructure, is the first employer to be recognized through the BCBSMA Health Care Excellence Award. EMC successfully engaged its workforce and their families in learning how individual behaviors, choices and attitudes influence health care expenditures, waste and overall outcomes through its health management program, *Partnership in Health*. The overall health care trend of the company continues to grow at rates less than half of national levels.

Visiting Nurse Association of Middlesex-East and Visiting Nurse Hospice, a provider of home health services to communities north and northwest of Boston, was honored for reducing its rehospitalization rates from 29% to 17% within two years, the lowest in the state, while caring for an aging population that increasingly struggles with chronic conditions such as stroke, diabetes, emphysema, heart disease, and hypertension. This accomplishment has significantly reduced health care costs while improving the quality of life for patients living with chronic disease.