



For Immediate Release

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation Joins Blue Cross Blue Shield Association in Partnering with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to Address Youth Mental Health Crisis

A trauma-informed approach to mental health will empower youth to heal, build resilience and navigate emotional challenges with greater effectiveness and long-term well-being.

FARGO, N.D. – Today, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) Caring Foundation announced it is joining the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) in a partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to combat the youth mental health crisis in the United States through trauma-informed approaches to behavioral health care. BCBSA and Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) companies nationwide are joining together to invest over \$10 million to help Boys & Girls Clubs of America implement trauma-informed practices by 2026 in its more than 5,000 Clubs. The funding will provide training for 48,000 staff to better support the emotional and mental well-being of over 3.6 million children.

“Addressing youth mental health concerns is one of the most important priorities we must act on. By collaborating closely with the Boys & Girls Clubs to target and address specific mental health needs in our youth, we will create lasting impact across the state,” said Dan Conrad, BCBSND Caring Foundation board chair and BCBSND president and CEO. “We are very excited about this partnership and look forward to seeing it roll out across North Dakota.”

With the support of BCBSND Caring Foundation and BCBSA, the 23 Boys & Girls Clubs of America in North Dakota will be able to incorporate trauma-informed practices in clubs across the country by:

- Creating and implementing resources to integrate trauma-informed strategies throughout clubs.
- Increasing staff awareness and skills through trauma-informed professional development and expanding regional trauma-informed training centers to reach staff across the country.
- Providing programming and resources that build young people’s social-emotional development skills and equip them to navigate challenging experiences.
- Increasing access to mental health services by piloting virtual therapy sessions for youth and staff.
- Evaluating Boys & Girls Clubs of America’s trauma-informed strategy to inform learnings and drive quality improvement.

“We know every child and teen is better equipped to succeed when we meet them where they are at to address their needs, and that includes providing access to reliable mental health resources,” said Robin Nelson, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Red River Valley. “Through our partnership with the

BCBSND Caring Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, we are eager to enhance our existing programming and provide the youth we serve with the tools they need to prepare for a great future.”

Today’s youth in North Dakota are living through a time of increasingly collective trauma with almost half of youth experiencing a mental health disorder. While the pandemic exacerbated the mental health crisis, trauma, isolation and other societal factors are increasingly impacting youth mental health at staggering rates.

New BCBSA research finds that diagnosed rates of anxiety among those 13 to 18 years of age have steadily risen between 2017 and 2021 and rates of ADHD and depression have grown 50% to 60% during the same period. According to North Dakota’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 19% of high school students considered suicide in 2021. In that same survey, 36% of high school students reported feeling so severely sad and hopeless every day for two weeks in a row that they stopped engaging in their usual activities.

To confront the ongoing youth mental health crisis in North Dakota, the BCBSND Caring Foundation is taking action through community initiatives, targeted grant programs and data-driven collaboration. This week, the Caring Foundation launched the Strike Out the Stigma partnership to raise funds and increase accessibility to mental health services. Visit bcbnsd.com/strikeout to learn more and participate. Through the CaringforKids grant program, evidence-based programs receive funding to support mental health services for youth. The BCBSND Caring Foundation also commissioned the [Social Determinants of Health Study](#) in 2022 to gain valuable insights on how to develop community-driven solutions to improve the well-being of North Dakotans.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) Caring Foundation

Established in 1989, the [BCBSND Caring Foundation](#) is a private 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Through giving and investing, the Caring Foundation focuses on key health issues that help improve the health and well-being of North Dakotans and their communities. Caring Foundation staff work with grantees to support nonprofit sustainability, collaborate on shared outcomes and create lasting change.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

For more than 160 years, [Boys & Girls Clubs of America](#) has enabled young people to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, more than 5,000 Clubs serve over 5 million young people through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native lands throughout the country, and serve military families in BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. They provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun, friendship, and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Club programs promote academic success, good character and leadership, and healthy lifestyles. National headquarters are located in Atlanta.

Contact:

Melissa Richard
Corporate Communications Manager, Marketing Communications and Customer Experience

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NORTH DAKOTA, FARGO
952-240-3477 (mobile) | melissa.richard@bcbsnd.com | www.bcbsnd.com