



NEWS RELEASE

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Blue Cross NC Invests \$5 Million to Combat Diabetes Epidemic in NC

Investment in Diabetes Free NC to cut diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes by expanding free access to diabetes prevention programs for all North Carolinians.

Durham, N.C. – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) announced plans to dramatically cut the diagnosis rates of Type 2 diabetes in North Carolina with a \$5 million investment in the Diabetes Free NC initiative.

Every year an estimated 53,000 people in North Carolina are diagnosed with diabetes, and about 2.6 million adults live with prediabetes. The investment will remove barriers, such as cost and accessibility that have historically prevented many North Carolinians with prediabetes from participating in diabetes prevention programs offered throughout the state. The investment will be a significant step toward creating a healthier, diabetes-free North Carolina.

“Diabetes has a major impact on people’s lives, and this investment gets us beyond the treatment and management of this devastating disease,” said Dr. Patrick Conway, president and CEO of Blue Cross NC. “Diabetes Free NC is about preventing the onset of Type 2 diabetes and curing North Carolinians living with prediabetes by empowering them to lead a healthier and higher quality life.”

The condition of prediabetes arises when a person’s blood glucose level (blood sugar level) is higher than normal but not high enough to lead to a Type 2 diabetes diagnosis. Thirty percent of people living with prediabetes are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes within five years if there is no intervention. Individuals with Type 2 diabetes are at an increased risk of stroke, heart disease and other serious health problems that have an estimated annual cost of \$10.9 billion in North Carolina.

“We have a window where we can detect people who are at risk of getting diabetes and be able to intervene. A diabetes prevention program does just that,” said Dr. Betsey Tilson, North Carolina state health director and chief medical officer for the Department of Health and Human Services. “We know that through evidence-based diabetes prevention programs we can reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes by 60 percent. With structured lifestyle programs that look at eating, exercise and lifestyle changes, we can dramatically decrease an individual’s risk of progressing to Type 2 diabetes.”

The Diabetes Free NC initiative is a collaboration between North Carolina Division of Public Health and NC State University. The initiative supports Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) recognized diabetes prevention programs across the state that provide a comprehensive, evidence-based curriculum promoting the adoption of healthier diets and increased levels of physical activity to prevent the full onset of Type 2 diabetes.

“With Blue Cross and Blue Shield’s generous investment, our programs can now be offered for free to all qualifying adults across the state regardless of their health insurance coverage,” said Dr. Carolyn Dunn, professor and nutrition specialist at NC State University and lead author and principal investigator of Eat Smart, Move More, Prevent Diabetes, an online diabetes prevention program. “Their support allows us to expand our learning options to include onsite support groups or real-time, online programs. We have a lot of unique formats now to ensure access to programs in urban and rural communities, with flexible times that are convenient for the participants.”

The funding will also allow Diabetes Free NC to connect health care providers, employers and all CDC-recognized organizations that provide evidence-based prevention programs across the state to ensure access, knowledge and cost barriers are eliminated in the effort to reduce diabetes diagnoses in North Carolina. The implementation of a Request for Applications Process will help fund existing programs, allowing them to expand participation at no cost to the participants.

To promote all available Diabetes Free NC CDC-recognized programs and maximize reach across the state, a new website, DiabetesFreeNC.com, will serve as a portal for qualifying adults interested in taking the first step toward their diabetes-free future.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) improves the health and well-being of our customers and communities by providing innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.89 million members, including approximately 1 million served on behalf of other Blue Plans. Since 1933, we have worked to make North Carolina a better place to live through our support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit Blue Cross NC online at bluecrossnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

About Diabetes Free NC

Diabetes Free NC is an initiative of NC State University and North Carolina Public Health that supports diabetes prevention programs (DPPs) throughout the state. DPPs are 12-month programs designed to empower people at risk for prediabetes to take charge of their health and well-being. Participants are enrolled in classes that can be taken in person, online or a combination of both. All DPP providers listed on Diabetes Free NC website are approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Participants enrolled in DPPs offered by these providers learn ways to improve their eating, increase their physical activity and reduce stress. Onsite classes and combination classes are offered in selected counties across the state. Online classes are available anywhere an internet connection is available. To learn more about the program, or to find a class in your area, visit DiabetesFreeNC.com.

About Eat Smart, Move More, Prevent Diabetes

Eat Smart, Move More, Prevent Diabetes is a CDC-recognized online provider of the National Diabetes Prevention Program. The program focuses on evidence-based strategies to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Classes are held online in an interactive real-time format with a

live instructor, which has proven to be a successful delivery method for a lifestyle program. The Eat Smart, Move More, Prevent Diabetes team is overseeing and implementing the Diabetes Free NC initiative and is an outreach program of NC State University and NC State Extension. To learn more or to enroll as an individual or as part of a corporate wellness program, visit esmmpreventdiabetes.com.

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