

BETTER CARE AMERICA

Protecting the Health of Vulnerable Communities During COVID-19

Every community in the United States has endured the devastating consequences of COVID-19 as our nation works to overcome this crisis. But few have felt the impact of this disease more acutely than communities of color.

The disproportionate impact is evidenced by the fact that African Americans account for about [36% of COVID-19 hospitalizations](#), despite only representing 13% of the total population. Researchers believe this is due in part to longstanding disparities in care, and because communities of color in the U.S. may have multiple risk factors.

Public health officials, doctors, nurses, health insurance providers, and other essential partners are working together to support communities of color during this public health crisis.

Health insurance providers have long been committed to addressing the social and financial conditions that impact health, such as food insecurity, housing stability, and a lack of access to transportation. Now, health insurance providers are building on these well-established programs and stepping up to help the most vulnerable communities during this unprecedented time.

Some of the actions health insurance providers are taking to support people at high-risk, such as communities of color, include:

Engaging on the ground in vulnerable communities

[AmeriHealth Caritas](#) is focused on improving the health and well-being of underserved communities at this time of crisis. It is conducting “well-check” outreach to vulnerable members and helping connect them to their providers and

community resources. In select communities, AmeriHealth Caritas has also expanded the delivery of medically tailored and ready-to-eat meals and groceries to the homes of members who have been confirmed to have COVID-19, as well as to members at highest risk for COVID-19 complications.

[Geisinger](#) has partnered with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and Weinberg Northeast Food Bank to distribute emergency food boxes to members, patients, and those in need in the community. These boxes are being delivered from Geisinger’s Fresh Food Farmacy locations and include shelf-stable supplies, recipes, educational information, and other resources. Geisinger is targeting food insecure members, but any patient or community member in need is eligible. To prevent potential spread of COVID-19, staff will be doing curbside or front porch deliveries.

Proactively reaching out and connecting people with resources in their communities

[Anthem](#) has partnered with Aunt Bertha, a leading social care network, which helps connect people to free and reduced-cost social services in their communities. These programs include COVID-19-specific assistance, such as food delivery and help paying bills. All Anthem members can access the more than 350,000 programs, which are available in every zip code across the U.S.

CVS Health is making [Aetna’s Resources For Living](#) program available to all Americans. The program includes access to support for basic needs like family meals, access to childcare, and financial guidance.

[Florida Blue](#) social workers are helping members and nonmembers fill gaps, such as finding food, utility and rent assistance, and many other types of relief

programs. Nurses and social workers can also share general information about COVID-19 and testing site locations throughout the state.

[Humana's](#) Zoom In digital tool enables people to find help with food, transportation, housing, finding a health care provider, or financial or legal advice, available in their own community.

Making financial contributions and helping bridge economic gaps

[Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas](#) (BCBSTX) announced a \$1 million donation to Communities Foundation of Texas to support nonprofits statewide providing critical services such as: personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders, childcare for first responders and healthcare professionals, and services for senior adults, including meal and grocery delivery. The donation grant builds on BCBSTX's history of developing strong partnerships and supporting community-based organizations addressing social factors that impact health and well-being in Texas.

[Centene](#) has made a series of investments to address the social determinants of health for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis. Centene is partnering with Feeding America's network of food banks to donate 1 million meals a month for 12 months to feed communities all over the country. Centene is also purchasing 50,000 gift cards for use on essential items. The cards will be delivered to local providers and other community resources for distribution to people in need. The gift cards, which will have \$35 of value each, can be used to purchase essential health care and educational items, including diapers, over-the-counter medicines, cleaning supplies, and books.

[Harvard Pilgrim](#) has donated over \$3 million to COVID-19 relief efforts to community organizations in CT, ME, MA, and NH. The money will help select restaurants throughout the region to provide and deliver take-out meals to families in need and help to put people back to work. Additionally, these resources will assist communities in facilitating access to COVID-19 testing.

[Hometown Health](#) is allowing employees and their dependents who are already enrolled in Hometown Health group coverage and who are laid off or whose hours are reduced below minimum thresholds to be considered a benefits eligible employee, to continue to be covered under the employer's Hometown Health group policy.

[Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey](#) has donated \$2 million to The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, the response and support organization established by New Jersey's First Lady. With the donation, Horizon has contributed \$4.35 million for protective equipment for health care workers, food, and social services in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

[Independence Blue Cross](#) is supporting the new PHL COVID-19 Fund, which will provide grants to Greater Philadelphia nonprofit organizations that serve vulnerable populations. [Independence Blue Cross's](#) Blue Crew continues to volunteer, including making calls to schedule food deliveries for the Share Food Program, and buying needed items from virtual wish lists for their favorite charities.

[Molina](#) has committed support and resources to various nonprofit organizations serving those in need across the country, including NY, WA, NM, MI, CA, FL, TX, and other evolving hot-spot states. The support, supplies, and monetary donations have been made to an array of trusted organizations that directly serve vulnerable populations.

[Tufts Health Plan](#) Foundation is providing funding totaling \$345,000 to help with housing and equity efforts in MA, RI, NH, and CT. The organizations include housing providers, those working with people experiencing homelessness and immigrant communities, and those several serving as hubs for collaborative regional responses.

Health insurance providers will continue to take [decisive actions](#) to ensure timely access to effective care and protect the health of vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information about the coronavirus, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

For more information about how health insurance providers are stepping up to fight the coronavirus, visit [ahip.org/health-insurance-providers-respond-to-coronavirus](https://www.ahip.org/health-insurance-providers-respond-to-coronavirus).