

MOVING FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION FOR A HEALTHIER BEGINNING

The United States faces maternal and infant health crises: It remains among the most dangerous developed nations for pregnant women, new moms and babies. Maternal and infant health outcomes are especially concerning for women and babies of color. While the causes of these racial and ethnic disparities are long-standing and complex, researchers have identified implicit bias—the attitudes and stereotypes that affect an individual’s understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner—as a threat to improving maternal health outcomes.



PARTNERING TO ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) is partnering with March of Dimes to expand its “Awareness to Action: Dismantling Bias in Maternal and Infant Healthcare™” training program across the Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) System as one of the core elements of its national health equity goal to reduce maternal health disparities by 50% in five years. Through this national partnership, BCBS companies can offer March of Dimes’ implicit bias training—which was awarded the 2020 Award of Honor by the American Hospital Association—to providers, nursing and medical students, perinatal quality collaboratives, community organizations and their employees.

Black and Native American women
ARE 2-3X MORE LIKELY
to die from pregnancy-related complications.¹

Hispanic women have a
32% HIGHER RATE
of serious maternal morbidity.²

**DELIVERY COMPLICATIONS
ARE 46% HIGHER**
among Black women.³

The unique live or virtual learning experience helps health care professionals caring for women before, during and after pregnancy recognize how stereotypes can unconsciously impact decisions, a patient’s health care experience, and overall quality of care. The course provides an overview of implicit bias, its impact on the maternal and infant health crisis, the history of structural racism in the U.S., and strategies for providers to both mitigate racial bias in maternity care and commit to a culture of equity.



The Blue System launched a comprehensive, multi-year [National Health Equity Strategy \(NEHS\)](#) to change the trajectory of health disparities and re-imagine a more equitable health care system. The NEHS is a series of initiatives that rely on close collaboration with health care providers, community leaders and advocates and which will scale programs from local BCBS companies proven to improve equity, creating standardized, national measures.



March of Dimes [leads the fight](#) for the health of all moms and babies. We support research, lead programs and provide education and advocacy so that every family can have the best possible start. Building on a successful 80-year legacy, we support every pregnant person and every family.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

With deep, local ties within the health care community, BCBS companies are uniquely positioned to connect their health care and community partners with March of Dimes' valuable training and resources, raising implicit bias awareness and fostering lasting change. Here are a few examples:

BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF NORTH CAROLINA

In North Carolina, Blue Cross and Blue Shield partnered with March of Dimes to launch its "Awareness to Action: Dismantling Bias in Maternal and Infant Healthcare™" program, focusing their support with health care professionals who work in maternity care settings, including doctors, nurses and doulas. Through the partnership, health care workers across the state can virtually attend March of Dimes' implicit bias training at no cost, learning strategies to mitigate bias in maternity care and how to build a culture of equity in workplaces and communities.

HIGHMARK

For many, their first introduction to the U.S. health care system is through interactions with a nurse or nurse practitioner. To support a welcoming environment that is racially and culturally sensitive, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware's partnership with March of Dimes focuses on training future nurses as they prepare to enter the health care workforce. To date, three Schools of Nursing in the state of Delaware offer March of Dimes' e-learning implicit bias training as part of their curriculum, funded by Highmark BCBS Delaware.

ANTHEM BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD

Unconscious bias can exist in a waiting room, doctor's office or a delivery room. To combat factors driving maternal health disparities, the Anthem Foundation and March of Dimes joined forces in 2020 to expand March of Dimes' implicit bias training program across 16 states and Washington, D.C. This collaboration focuses on building health equity partnerships with more than 25 hospitals and providing resources and educational materials to improve the health of moms and babies. In 2020, providers trained through Anthem's partnership cared for more than 65,000 moms.

INSPIRING CULTURAL HUMILITY

In the short time since March of Dimes' implicit bias training launched in July 2020, March of Dimes has trained 30,000 health care professionals nationwide, raising awareness of unconscious biases and making a difference in the way maternal health care workers view their patients, their roles as health care providers and how to change the way they approach their patients.

“ What Participants Are Saying

"I never looked at certain situations as bias. This training helped me rethink the processes I do daily."

"I gained new perspectives and ideas on the structural biases that exist, and how we can begin to break down those barriers."

"I really appreciated how you addressed both the individual level (bias) and systems level (systemic racism) factors. Can't address only one without the other if we are to make effective change."

ADVOCATING FOR EQUITABLE MATERNAL HEALTH CARE

As a health care partner to one in three Americans, BCBS companies are committed to working with Congress, the Administration and other partners to advance solutions that create a more equitable health care system. For instance, BCBSA is a member of the Equitable Maternal Health Coalition (EMHC)—a broad alliance of health care, public health, community-based and patient advocacy organizations. Led by March of Dimes, the EMHC Coalition strongly advocates for policy and legislative solutions, such as the Black Maternal Health Caucus' Momnibus legislative package, that will reduce maternal morbidity and mortality while improving maternal health outcomes by advancing safe, equitable and affordable access to maternal health care. Additionally, BCBSA has teamed up with March of Dimes to encourage lawmakers to make improving the health of the nation's moms and babies a top priority through its #BlanketChange awareness campaign.