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FLORIDA LITERACY COALITION, INC.

NEWS RELEASE

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Provides Grants to Support Health Literacy

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) and the [Florida Literacy Coalition](#) (FLC) are excited to announce a new grant opportunity to promote health literacy in Florida. The goal is to provide health-education resources for local adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and family literacy programs so that students in these programs can make informed choices about their health and nutrition. The cornerstone of the statewide initiative, now entering its second year, is a mini-grants program that will award 16 renewable \$5,000 grants in 2010.

All adults need an adequate level of health literacy to establish good communication between patient and health care providers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, almost 50 percent of adults who don't finish high school lack basic health literacy. These people are also more likely to suffer from chronic conditions and be unaware of how to manage their disease(s).

According to the Center on an Aging Society at Georgetown University, \$73 billion is spent annually on unnecessary health care because of low healthy literacy. People who lack health literacy skills are much more likely to take medications incorrectly, be hospitalized and spend more time in the hospital than people with higher health literacy. The potential for savings and better health are significant. Adult education, literacy and family literacy programs can play an important role in helping people to acquire these skills.

"We at BCBSF recognize our responsibility to provide customer-centered communications about our quality products and services that are designed to meet the needs of our members," said Susan Towler, executive director, Community Affairs, BCBSF. "In order to do that, we must first understand who these people are, what they want and what they really need."

(more)

Last year BCBSF and FLC were proud to award ten organizations with health literacy mini-grants. The second year of funding will reflect a combination of new grants and renewal grants, allowing current programs to continue and build upon their ongoing efforts.

“This initiative reflects Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida’s outstanding commitment to helping adult learners develop the skills they need to be informed health advocates for themselves and their children,” said Greg Smith, executive director of FLC. “We have already seen evidence of how this initiative is helping people to become more health literate and we really appreciate BCBSF making it all possible.”

The application and guidelines are available on the Florida Literacy Coalition’s website at www.floridaliteracy.org. Proposals must be received by March 11, 2010. For questions, please contact Naomi Soto at (407) 246-7110 ext. 209 or via e-mail at soton@floridaliteracy.org.

About the Florida Literacy Coalition

Established in 1985, The [Florida Literacy Coalition](http://www.floridaliteracy.org) (FLC) promotes, supports and advocates for the effective delivery of quality adult and family literacy services in the state of Florida. As a statewide umbrella literacy organization and the host of Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center, FLC provides a range of services to support more than 300 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community-based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) is a leader in Florida’s health industry. Since 1944, the company has been dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of all those it serves by offering an array of choices. BCBSF is a not-for-profit, policyholder-owned, tax-paying mutual company. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please see its Web site at www.bcbsfl.com.

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