**TEAM UP for Children Initiative Adds Four Massachusetts Health Centers to its Pediatric Behavioral Health Program**

*1 in 4 children using Massachusetts federally-qualified health centers*

*will benefit from important transformational model to better integrate behavioral health services*

**BOSTON, November 17, 2019 –** [TEAM UP for Children](http://www.teamupforchildren.org/) (Transforming and Expanding Access to Mental Health Care in Urban Pediatrics), a model of integrated pediatric behavioral health care, today expanded its program to four additional federally qualified health centers in Massachusetts. TEAM UP seeks to improve early identification of behavioral health problems and provide a full complement of preventative and treatment services to children and their families.

New health centers joining the initiative include [Brockton Neighborhood Health Center](http://www.bnhc.org/main.html), [DotHouse Health](http://www.dorchesterhouse.org/), [Greater New Bedford Community Health Center](http://gnbchc.org/) and [South Boston Community Health Center](https://www.sbchc.org/). The expansion builds off the success and best practices developed since the launch of TEAM UP in 2016 by the initial cohort of three health centers, [Codman Square Health Center](http://www.codman.org/), [The Dimock Center](https://dimock.org/) and [Lowell Community Health Center](https://www.lchealth.org/), each of which will continue as TEAM UP health centers under the expanded initiative.

Across the country, 1 out of 5 children experience a behavioral health issue, yet most children, nearly 80%, do not receive an adequate treatment. It can take 8 to 10 years to receive an accurate diagnosis of mental health conditions and initiate treatment in children, and delays in treatment over those vital years can lead to lasting impacts on development.

TEAM UP seeks to improve access to pediatric mental health services and provide earlier care by integrating evidence-based behavioral health services into the primary care clinics of community health centers in Massachusetts. Led by Boston Medical Center (BMC), the program is comprised of interdisciplinary teams of providers working together to promote positive child health and well-being. In addition to expanding access to care through the integration of behavioral health clinicians and community health workers or family partners, TEAM UP supports enhanced access to specialty care, including psychiatric consultation through BMC, and linkages to other community services, such as early intervention, to ensure high-risk children can access needed services.

“Every day in clinic I see parents and children who struggle to describe how symptoms of depression, anxiety, and past trauma affect their family relationships and their readiness to learn at school,” said Dr. Huy Nguyen, Chief Medical Officer at DotHouse Health and practicing pediatrician at the health center. “TEAM UP’s infusion of attention and resources towards developing a pediatric mental health home at DotHouse Health is exactly what we need to raise up families’ voices and to strengthen socio-emotional health and resilience at the earliest age.”

“There is a tremendous need in Massachusetts and across the nation for better integration of behavioral health care into pediatric primary care clinics,” said Megan Bair-Merritt, MD, MSCE, TEAM UP evaluation Co-Director, and pediatrician at Boston Medical Center and professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine. “Through its evidence-informed approach and community health center partnerships, TEAM UP is able to build teams of health care providers that include community health workers and behavioral health clinicians, to ensure care and treatment is successful. This meaningful work will bring a new level of behavioral care to thousands of children using Massachusetts federally-qualified health centers, which is profound.”

Over the past three years, through an initial $8M investment by the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, TEAM UP has made quality care possible for more than 19,000 children with plans to reach 21,000 more, representing 25% of the federally-qualified health center pediatric population by 2023. With the expansion of the program, made possible by $14 million in additional funding from the Smith Family Foundation and The Klarman Family Foundation, TEAM UP aims to train a total of 400 health center staff, double the number of trained therapists, and increase the number of community health workers in TEAM UP health centers.

An on-going evaluation of TEAM UP’s efforts by Boston University School of Medicine researchers has shown that participating community health centers in the first cohort have greatly improved their capacity to provide integrated behavioral health care in their pediatric clinics. Teams work together —collaborating in the exam room during appointments with families — to identify and address children’s behavioral health needs, often connecting patients to evidence-based behavioral health services within the walls of the health center. The impact of TEAM UP also extends outside of the health center to support families and serve as a liaison to schools and other behavioral health resources and social service providers, even before an official diagnosis has been made.

Additionally, TEAM UP has proven to be transformative for health centers’ internal operations, with evidence of greater satisfaction by medical providers and increased reimbursement to the health centers for services. A focus on continuous quality improvement has helped guide the health centers’ program management and refinement, and findings from Phase I will help shape program rollout at the newly added health centers. Through a collaborative, family-centric, data-driven approach, TEAM UP will continue to improve access and advance the growing field of integrated behavioral health for children and families across Massachusetts.

**About DotHouse Health**

In 1887, DotHouse Health was established as a settlement house in the Fields Corner neighborhood of Dorchester to serve low-income and immigrant populations. We have evolved over time in response to the changing needs and demographics of the community. In 1972, with the support of area residents, DotHouse obtained federal and state funding to create a health center, providing culturally appropriate, comprehensive, and community-based care to residents regardless of their ability to pay. Today, with a staff of over 200 employees, the health center connects over 20,000 patients and residents with medical care, social services, and community programs to support the overall good health of our patients and help build a stronger and healthier community. DotHouse is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations and recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance as a Level 3 Patient Centered Medical Home.

**About the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation**

The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation is committed to effecting permanent positive change in the lives of the residents of Greater Boston, particularly individuals and families in economically disadvantaged communities. Today, three generations of the Smith family oversee the Foundation,

stewarding approximately $14 million annually in grants aimed at promoting greater health, educational attainment, and economic mobility. For more information, visit [smithfamilyfoundation.net](http://www.klarmanfoundation.org/).

**About The Klarman Family Foundation**

The Klarman Family Foundation seeks to identify areas of unmet need and to advance solutions to addressing them. As a way to learn and create greater impact, the Foundation works in collaboration with other funders and focuses on key issues, including: advancing understanding of the biological basis of health and illness, ensuring a healthy democracy, supporting the global Jewish community and Israel, and expanding access to vital services and enrichment opportunities in Greater Boston. Established in 1990 by Beth and Seth Klarman, the Foundation is located in Boston, MA. For more information, visit [klarmanfoundation.org](http://www.klarmanfoundation.org/).

**About Boston Medical Center**

Boston Medical Center is a private, not-for-profit, 514-bed, academic medical center that is the primary teaching affiliate of Boston University School of Medicine. It is the largest and busiest provider of trauma and emergency services in New England. Boston Medical Center offers specialized care for complex health problems and is a leading research institution, receiving more than $97 million in sponsored research funding in fiscal year 2018. It is the 15th largest funding recipient in the U.S. from the National Institutes of Health among independent hospitals. In 1997, BMC founded Boston Medical Center Health Plan, Inc., now one of the top ranked Medicaid MCOs in the country, as a non-profit managed care organization. Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine are partners in the Boston HealthNet – 14 community health centers focused on providing exceptional health care to residents of Boston. For more information, please visit <http://www.bmc.org>.

**Media Contact**

Bevin Wallace

Weber Shandwick

[bwallace@webershandwick.com](mailto:bwallace@webershandwick.com)

617-520-7118