

The Blue Foundation

FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA



NEWS RELEASE

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Grant Gives Uninsured Better Access to Mental Health Care

Funds will provide rural areas with services recently cut from state and federal budgets

LAKE BUTLER, Fla. – The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida's (BCBSF) philanthropic affiliate, recently awarded the Rural Health Partnership of North Central Florida a \$49,000, one-year grant. Funds will benefit the Mental Health Alliance of North Central Florida, a group of rural health care providers who aim to boost access to mental health services for those living in low-income, rural areas.

Rural residents with mental illnesses often are barred from accessing health services because of their inability to pay. Suicide rates are a standard indicator of mental illness. Between 2000 and 2002, the suicide rate among nine rural North Central Florida counties (Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee and Union) was 17.4 — exceeding the statewide rate of 14.0.

Recent federal and state budget cuts led to a reduction in mental health services available in rural North Central Florida, further exacerbating the problem for low-income residents. The Rural Health Partnership will use grant funds to provide coordination and grant writing services to bring more funds into North Central Florida, ensuring that additional mental health services are made available to area uninsured.

The Rural Health Partnership grant is one of nine, totaling \$514,105, that The Blue Foundation will present this summer to nonprofit health clinics and community outreach programs across Florida. Through strategic grantmaking, The Blue Foundation supports programs that increase access to quality health-related services for uninsured and underserved Floridians. The Blue Foundation annually awards up to \$1 million in grants during two grant cycles. The next Request for Proposals deadline is September 17, 2004. For an application, please call 1-800-477-3736, ext. 63215.

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is a separate, philanthropic affiliate of BCBSF incorporated in the state of Florida. The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, and its parent, BCBSF, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, please visit its Web site at www.bluefoundationfl.org.

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