



MASSACHUSETTS

September 2009

Dear Business Partner:

[Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Extends Coverage for the H1N1 Vaccine](#)

The H1N1 flu virus continues to be a serious public health concern. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts has been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to prepare for the H1N1 flu. We understand that employers play a key role in protecting the health and safety of our health plan members. For this reason, we have joined the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and its 39 independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies in making a collective effort to support state and local initiatives aimed at limiting the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts will provide coverage for the administration of the H1N1 vaccine with no out-of-pocket cost for the member, regardless of plan type or benefit design.

[H1N1 Vaccine Coverage Guidelines](#)

An H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in October. The federal government is supplying the vaccine and, in some cases, supplies to administer it to states and health care providers at no cost. Providers are expected to charge a small fee only for the *administration* of the vaccine; a recommended amount for this fee is expected to be proposed by the CDC.

In light of this new information, we will not apply any member cost-share charge for the administration of the H1N1 vaccine. If, however, members enrolled in fully insured and self-funded plans receive other office visit services in addition to the administration of the H1N1 vaccine, they will be subject to cost-sharing as outlined in their contracts. Self-funded plan sponsors will incur a professional service claim charge for the H1N1 vaccine administration as well as the balance for any other additional covered office visit services rendered.

[About the H1N1 Vaccine](#)

The CDC recommends that certain groups be the first to receive the H1N1 vaccine, including:

- Pregnant women
- Health care workers and emergency medical responders
- People caring for infants under 6 months of age
- Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years of age
- People aged 25 to 64 years with underlying medical conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes)

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For More Information

For more information on the H1N1 vaccine and preventing the spread of this virus and the seasonal flu, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov. Information that may be helpful to your clients as they develop their own plans to respond to the current H1N1 influenza outbreak is available at www.bluecrossma.com/employer and www.bluecrossma.com/broker.

By eliminating barriers for your clients' employees to get the H1N1 vaccine, we hope that they will take all appropriate precautions, including receiving flu vaccinations, as a way to protect their health and respond to the CDC's concern regarding wider transmission and possibly greater impact during the 2009-2010 influenza season. We believe that these preventive measures will prove to be far less costly to businesses than the health care and other expenses, including lost productivity, that result from employees getting the flu. As always, we are committed to putting our members' health first.

If you have any questions, please contact your account executive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy J. O'Brien".

Timothy J. O'Brien
Senior Vice President
Sales Division