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Buffalo City Mission Announces Healthcare Partnership

Centered in the City Mission's Recuperative Care Unit, the collaboration will provide integrated, comprehensive healthcare services to help homeless patients discharged from the hospital



BUFFALO, NEW YORK (October 26, 2021) – The Buffalo City Mission today announced a new collaboration that will provide a system of integrated, coordinated care for homeless patients discharged from the hospital.

The collaboration with Amerigroup, in partnership with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York (BCBSWNY), will work to eliminate health disparities through evidence-based research, robust analytics and program design. The City Mission's Recuperative Care Unit (RCU) – located in the Alfiero Family Center of Hope and Promise – will provide those services to help discharged patients by giving them access to services needed on the path to healthy and stable lives. The initiative will also help decrease the percentage of readmission rates to area hospital emergency rooms.

“We are incredibly proud to partner with Amerigroup and Highmark BCBSWNY, whose proven vision and network will help us deliver an elevated level of care, hope and healing for our region's homeless,” said Stuart Harper, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Buffalo City Mission. “For many poor and homeless in our community, the journey after the hospital does not end. Our Recuperative Care Unit provides treatment and resources to meet them where they are in their road to recovery. Together, we can now provide even more support for our neighbors in need.”



“Focus on social determinants, health equity, and the communities we serve are at the core of our mission and our collaboration with the Buffalo City Mission will help make a meaningful difference for the recently discharged homeless population,” said Michael Hofer, President of Amerigroup Western New York. “The City Mission is an integral member of our community and has been innovative in their approach to homelessness and housing instability. We are excited to align with them on their newest endeavor, in this time of critical need.”

The partnership will open access to the RCU treatment and services for Medicaid Managed Care members of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York. Facilitated enrollers will also be embedded within the model to assist homeless patients with enrolling in insurance coverage.

“Housing is a health issue,” said Dr. Michael Edbauer, President of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York. “We’re proud to open access to the City Mission’s integrated services for our members in need and others across our community.”

Western New York has a great need for intensive, coordinated care for homeless patients’ post-hospitalization. At the time of discharge, this population is particularly vulnerable with nowhere to go. These individuals are four times more likely to be readmitted within 30 days.

The partnership follows on the City Mission’s RCU model to reduce readmissions and improve hospital capacity – an initiative shared with area healthcare providers. By leasing bed space to area hospitals, the City Mission partners with providers to deliver a safe and healthy environment for local homeless patients who need further wellness care to fully recover after hospital discharge.

This outcomes-focused initiative involves a number of regional collaborators, including one with the City Mission’s largest hospital partner, Erie County Medical Center (ECMC).

In February 2021, ECMC – in collaboration with the Buffalo City Mission and researchers from the University at Buffalo School of Nursing – launched a new medical respite program to serve those in the community who need care continuity the most. Today, their work continues to help meet the homeless community’s need for medical respite beds, and addresses the need to reduce hospital readmissions following discharge.

“With pervasive homelessness in Buffalo and Western New York, our community needs shared commitment to address the systemic issues and help patients in need,” said Andrew L. Davis, Chief Operating Officer of ECMC. “We salute the collaboration between Amerigroup, Highmark BCBSWNY and the City Mission, which represents the latest in our opportunity for health and social sectors to partner in developing a new model of care for the homeless. Together, we can help to serve this vulnerable population.”

The Buffalo City Mission continues to innovate in its approach to homelessness and housing instability. Its RCU can provide a safe discharge for those patients who have received the care they need and are ready to be discharged. As part of the Alfiero Family Center of Hope and Promise, it is also part of the City Mission’s vision to move into the next century to provide services that help prevent and decrease homelessness in the community.



To learn more, visit buffalocitymission.org.

About the Buffalo City Mission

The Buffalo City Mission, founded in 1917, is a nonprofit organization providing preventative, emergency, and transitional housing programs to thousands of people who are homeless and impoverished every year. The Mission includes the new Alfiero Family Center of Hope and Promise and a Women and Children's Shelter (Cornerstone Manor), along with the Dick Road Thrift Store to serve the Western New York community. For more information, please visit www.buffalocitymission.org or call (716) 854-8181.

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About Amerigroup and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York

Amerigroup partners with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY to administer and manage the company's Medicaid managed care programs. These programs provide free and low cost health benefits to over 50,000 Western New York residents.