



# Building Healthy Communities: School Media Toolkit



**Blue Cross  
Blue Shield**  
of Michigan

**2011**

# Building Healthy Communities School Toolkit

## Welcome!

The Building Healthy Communities school toolkit teaches schools how to put on media events and raise awareness of their recent receipt of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Building Healthy Communities grants. It is important that community residents be aware that local schools are teaching their students to live healthier lives with the help of the Michigan Blues' grants. One of the many ways to promote your school's acceptance of a grant is through an International Walk to School Day event, inviting media to tour the school or to attend a kick-off rally hosted by you. International Walk to School Day is a great opportunity to jump-start your Building Healthy Communities program.

The toolkit provides a "How To" guide for events, information on how to participate in Walk to School Day, a sample press release, a sample media advisory and a media list for your school's county. If you are interested in participating in Walk to School Day or promoting an alternate event at your school, but do not have the resources to do so, our communications team can help.

Please feel free to direct any questions to Trish Hubbell in Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's Corporate Communications office (contact information below).

We look forward to assisting you in planning a successful media event.

Trish Hubbell  
(313) 225-8395

[Phubbell@bcbsm.com](mailto:Phubbell@bcbsm.com)

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Blue Cross will promote your school's efforts in building healthier communities if you send us photos of your events. However, everyone in the photos must sign the release form provided in this toolkit (see Appendix F). Completed and signed forms can be scanned and emailed to me with one or two photos. Thanks.



## Press Release Process for Building Healthy Communities Grant Recipients

We are pleased to partner with you on the 2011-2012 Building Healthy Communities initiative. It's important to promote your activities so the community can get involved and support your efforts. Below are recommendations for schools interested in sending their own press releases to local media.

### The media release should include:

- The initiative and how your community will benefit from it.
- How others in the community can get involved in the initiative.
- The amount of money awarded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

### When mentioning Blue Cross Blue Shield in the release, please use the following guidelines:

- In text, use the proper spelling and upper and lower case placement as follows: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Note that there are spaces between all of the words.
- State how the award ties back to BCBSM's Social Mission, using the language below:

(Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has a unique mission that is different from other health insurance companies. The company is committed to focusing on reducing health care costs and improving quality, increasing access to health care coverage and services for the uninsured and underinsured, and improving the health status of Michigan's residents, particularly children).

If you would like to use a quote from a BCBSM spokesperson in the press release, we can help you with the approval process. Please send the press release to the designated contact person from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan for final review of the information. (Trish Hubbell at [phubbell@bcbsm.com](mailto:phubbell@bcbsm.com))

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan logo (cross and shield®) should **not** be used on your press materials. This is a rule of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and we are required to adhere to this rule. Thank you for your cooperation.

# What is a Fact Sheet?

Fact sheets are effective tools that can be used to educate the media about your school and the Building Healthy Communities grant program. Included in the toolkit (Appendix D) is a sample fact sheet that may be used by your school and given to the media to provide background on the Building Healthy Communities grant. We encourage your school to also create a fact sheet about the school community (e.g. number of students enrolled or a brief history of the school) and your healthy living activities that are planned for the 2011-2012 school year as a grant recipient.

The media want to know what projects you have planned, what the children will learn, how the community will be involved and what impact it will have.

Make sure to keep your fact sheet clear and concise. Now is the time to showcase your school.





## Events: A “How To” Guide:

**Media promotion is appropriate for any event or happening that relays good news or a positive message about your school. When promoting a Building Healthy Communities grant to the media, it is important to convey how the significance of this grant will benefit the school and students. We encourage you to tell the story of your receipt of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan’s grant.**

- **Media promotion can come in a variety of forms.**

Determining which vehicle is most appropriate to deliver your positive news depends on a variety of elements. Consideration must be given to the surroundings; if the school has utilized the grant money to build a large play structure for students, then a press event at the school may provide media with great visuals. On the other hand, if the grant were used for something such as paving a walking path, there may not be enough visuals to make an impact. Special attention also must be paid to the media audience who will be “hearing” the news. Schools in a large metropolitan area may receive less coverage, than schools in smaller communities simply because of larger impact stories. Thus, “pitching” a press release (calling the reporter with a story angle) may have a better result than hosting a costly press event. Smaller areas with only one community newspaper may find it beneficial to host one reporter at the school for an in-depth look at how the grant has benefited the school. Tours and interviews with teachers, students and school officials may lead to a

feature story in the paper.

Schools should use their own communication vehicles, such as website and newsletters, to announce receipt of a grant. Examples of communication vehicles to announce your grant or to announce a school’s press event can be found in this toolkit.

- **The first step in planning a press event is to determine the logistics. Establish a date, time and location.**

It is important to be considerate of news cycles when planning your event. Morning events are best, because print publication deadlines usually do not fall until the afternoon. Television broadcasts are typically in the early morning, noon and early evening. The location should be a place that is easy for media to locate and that provides a visual suitable for television cameras and print photographers.

# Events: A “How To” Guide:

- **Promote the event to students, parents, members of the community and elected officials.**

To have a successful event, make sure that members of the community are aware of the event and, in some cases, invited to attend. These may include: publishing articles in the school newsletter, posting flyers throughout the school community or sending a letter to parents. Following the event, it is important to continue to encourage students and their parents to adopt healthy habits at home. Included in the toolkit (Appendix D) is a flier promoting **WalkyTalk.com** that may be displayed in the school or distributed to parents.

- **Create an outline of the event. Determine what message you want to convey and the best way to do so. This may include guest speakers from the school, local officials or community partners.**

Speakers should understand why they are coming to the event and what is expected of them. They should be well versed on the topic. A media event is a great way to involve your community partner. They may participate as a speaker or as just an event attendee. Members of the community and parents often are invited to attend these events.

- **Determine a guest list. Local news media from all print, radio and television outlets should be invited to attend the event.**

Distribute a media advisory with details of when and where the event takes place. Also include brief paragraphs about what will be announced or discussed at the event. The media advisory (Appendix A) serves as an invitation to the media to attend the event. It is important to not give away too much information - just enough to entice media to come and hear more.

- **One-to-two days before the event, make calls to media you have not heard from to confirm their attendance.**

You want to have an idea of who and what to expect at the event so you can be prepared to greet media and accommodate their needs. Print media and radio should be called two days in advance; television should be called the day before or even the morning of the event to confirm.

Due to the evolving news cycle, members of the media may not be able to commit their attendance to the event, but a phone call always serves as a good reminder and is often appreciated.

- **Coordinate the event.**

Arrange for any audio/visual and staging needs as well as seating for media and special guests. Be sure to communicate with all vendors about your timing and logistical needs. Signs and banners can be created at local office supply stores. Signage can create a positive visual if your location is lacking.

- **The day of the event, be sure to be onsite an hour or two before the event is scheduled to start.**

If you have hired outdoor vendors, be sure to have their contact information available. Once media begin to arrive, greet them and distribute any media documents such as a press releases (Appendix B) or fact sheets (Appendix D). Introduce them to any special speakers and offer to coordinate interviews. Be sure to make a list of media who attend the event so that follow-up can be conducted to ensure that media have everything they need.

- **Immediately following the press event, a follow-up press release should be distributed to media who were unable to attend.**

The press release should contain all the details that were discussed at the event as well as a quote from one of the guest speakers. The press release should be created before the event and approved by the school, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and anyone quoted in the release.

# iWalk Fact Sheet



## What is International Walk to School Day in Michigan and why should your school participate?

- Walk to School Day in Michigan, held on Oct. 5, is part of International Walk to School Day (iWalk), a global event promoting exercise and healthy living to the nation's youth by encouraging students to walk or bike to school.
- The first-ever International Walk to School Day took place Oct. 4, 2000.
- In 2005, new legislation recognized the value of Safe Routes to School programs and is still providing funding for states to establish programs.
- In 2007, more than 60 percent of event organizers reported that their events influenced policy or engineering changes that would improve safety for walkers or bicyclists.
- In 2008, it was estimated that more than 6,500 schools in the United States participated in International Walk to School Day.
- In 2010, more than 40 countries and millions of walkers participated in International Walk to School Day.
- Whether your concern is safer and improved streets, healthier habits or cleaner air, Walk to School Day events are aimed at bringing forth permanent change for a more walkable America — one community at a time.



## How Walk to School Day positively influences students in Michigan

### • Improve Health and Encourage Physical Activities.

- Childhood obesity rates are skyrocketing, and estimates show that only 25 percent of Americans participate in the U.S. surgeon general's recommended daily dose of exercise (30 minutes).
- As students get older, physical activity participation drastically declines.
- Walking or cycling to and from school is an ideal way to get some of the day's exercise at no extra cost to the child or family.
- Walking or bicycling to school gives children time for physical activity and a sense of responsibility and independence, allows them to enjoy being outside and provides them with time to socialize with their parents and friends. It also helps children familiarize themselves with their neighborhoods.

# iWalk “Getting Started” Steps

Walk-to-school events can be as simple as a few kids and parents meeting to walk to school, or they can be elaborate celebrations. We encourage your school to participate in Walk to School Day and show your community that you are dedicated to improving the health of your students during the 2011-2012 school year with the help of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan’s Building Healthy Communities Grant program. Here are some tips to get started:

## 1. Involve your designated community partners and gain support from members of the community.

Successful events have the support and participation of community partners, school officials, parents, police and ,when possible, local elected officials. Together, these groups add energy and enthusiasm they are the people who truly make the walk a success.

## 2. Plan the walking event and work with partners to plan the celebration.

Together, decide what type of event fits your school and community. Then choose a focus for the walk, such as promoting physical activity or pedestrian safety, and determine whether the event will last one day or one week. Local businesses may be willing to sponsor the walk by providing refreshments or small gifts for participants. No matter the size of the event, it is a perfect way to kick off the 2011 Building Healthy Communities grant program.

## 3. Register your school on [saferoutesmichigan.org](http://saferoutesmichigan.org).

- Visit [saferoutesmichigan.org](http://saferoutesmichigan.org) to find out more information, register your school and download free materials that may be used to promote your walk to school event.
- On the home page, click on the “Register for Walk to School Day” link in the middle of the page.
- On the left sidebar, click “Register Your School” and complete all required fields.

## 4. Promote the event throughout the community.

- Spread the word to students, parents and others on how to participate and about the kickoff of the grant program. Internally, you can notify parents, students and community members through school newsletters, fliers and signs posted along the route.
- Documents found on the [saferoutesmichigan.org](http://saferoutesmichigan.org) web site may be used to promote the event.
- Encourage parents and guardians to walk to school with their children to demonstrate their support for this healthy way of transport.
- Using the media toolkit, promote Michigan Walk to School Day as the kick-off to the 2011 grant programs. Any media coverage of your event will bring great visibility to the event’s purpose and programs the schools are instituting with the help of grant money from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.



# Suggested iWalk Event Timeline



## Week of Sept. 12:

- Meet with your Building Healthy Communities grant leadership team to determine what kind of kick-off event best fits your school (e.g. Walk to School Day, a press conference or an invitation to media to tour the school and talk about the initiative).
- If your school is participating in Walk to School Day, register online at [saferoutesmichigan.org](http://saferoutesmichigan.org).
- Identify spokespeople from your school district and partner organizations, such as community members and elected officials and invite them to participate in the event.
- Determine the best location for the event.
- Recruit volunteers to assist with the event.
- Write your media advisory, press release and fact sheet using the provided samples.

## Week of Sept. 19:

- Begin promoting the program to students, parents, community members and elected officials.
- Send all press materials (e.g. media advisory, press release and fact sheet) to Trish Hubbell at BCBSM for approval: [phubbell@bcbsm.com](mailto:phubbell@bcbsm.com).
- Prepare talking points or brief comments for the speakers that they may use at the event. These comments will discuss the grant, the school's healthy living initiatives and the projects you will complete over the next year using grant money.

## Week of Sept. 26:

- Continue the promotion of the event by using the school newsletter, posting fliers and sending letters to parents throughout the community and talking about the event to the students.
- Submit letters to the editor and letters to lawmakers talking about the grant and exciting activities your school has planned for the 2011-2012 school year.
- Work on all logistical components of the event.

## Two days before event:

- Distribute media advisory via email to individuals provided on your media list.
- Touch base with speakers to ensure they are comfortable with their roles and speaking points

## Day before event:

- Call media that received the advisory to ensure that they are aware of the event and to determine if they are planning to attend.
- Tie up any loose ends with event preparation.

## Day of the event:

- Place signage that announces the event and clearly identifies where the media and guests need to go for the event.
- Make sure students use their pennants during walking events and that the banners provided are displayed. These materials demonstrate the united voice dedicated to building healthier communities.
- Ensure there is a designated photographer at the event. If media are unable to attend, sending post-event photos is often helpful and may generate media attention.
- Identify a reserved seating area for the event.
- Give hard copies of the press release to the media that attend the event. Immediately following the event, email the press release to those who are unable to attend.

## Post-event:

Follow up with the media that were unable to come to determine if they may be interested in conducting a one-on-one interview or doing a story on the school's initiative.

# Appendix A: Sample Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Month XX, Year

INSERT SCHOOL  
LOGO



Contact: **Name**  
**Phone E-mail**

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### **“School” Participates in Walk to School Day** Students Demonstrate their Commitment to Healthy Living

**What:** (Give a brief description of the event. Provide enough information to intrigue the media, but not too much that they won't need to attend the event).

**Example:**

Students at **school** are putting on their athletic shoes and walking to school as part of Walk to School Day. Walk to School Day is an international event where parents and teachers walk or bike to school with their children to encourage physical activity and raise awareness of traffic safety and Safe Routes to School. Walk to School Day is just one of many activities with emphasis on physical activity that **School** will participate in as part of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's *Building Healthy Communities* program.

**When:** **Wednesday, Oct. 5 at (insert time)**

**Where:** **Name of Location, Street Address, City**

**Who:** **Identify Key Event Attendees or Speakers**

**Why:** As part of its unique social mission, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is committed to improving the health status of Michigan's residents, particularly children. **NAME** School received a **\$XX, XXX** grant to strengthen its focus on physical and health education as part of the Blues' Building Healthy Communities Grant program. In all, 23 elementary schools throughout Michigan received \$20,000 to \$50,000 in funding to help children prevent serious health conditions later in life.

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more company information, visit [bcbsm.com](http://bcbsm.com).*

###

# Appendix B: Sample Press Release



INSERT SCHOOL  
LOGO



**Contact:** School Contact  
Phone; E-mail Address

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **“School” Participates in Walk to School Day Students Demonstrate their Commitment to Healthy Living**

**DETROIT, Oct. 5, 2011** — Students at **school** sent a strong message against childhood obesity as they joined together this morning, donning their athletic shoes, and walked or bicycled to school as part of Walk to School Day in Michigan, (in conjunction with International Walk to School Day which also takes place today).

Walk to School Day is an annual day that parents and teachers walk or bicycle to school with their children, promoting physical activity and [Safe Routes to School](#). This is the first of many activities that the school will be participating in throughout the school year as a part of the Building Healthy Communities grant they were awarded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

"International Walk to School Day is a great way to encourage children to walk to school and remind them of the importance of being physically active," said **First and Last Name, School title**. "Our students were excited to participate and we hope this event will encourage students to walk or bicycle to or from school on a regular basis."

As part of BCBSM's *Building Healthy Communities* program there will be a continued emphasis on physical activity and nutrition education throughout the year. In addition, the school will have a walking club for students and faculty; and a celebratory 5K run or walk event at the end of the school year to celebrate their accomplishments.

"It is very important that we continue to provide students with the tools and skills needed to make healthy choices at an early age and we will be able to continue to instill these values as a result of the funding that we received from Blue Cross," said **Last Name**. "Healthy eating and physical activity, which can be as simple as walking to school or choosing fruit over candy, are important life skills that help children grow and prevent health problems."

To learn more about Walk to School Day please visit <http://www.saferoutesmichigan.org>.

###

# Appendix C: Sample Fact Sheet

## BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN'S COMMITMENT TO REDUCING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's commitment to the health of Michigan is different from the other insurance companies doing business in our state. As a nonprofit health insurer, our mission is to expand access to high quality health care coverage for everyone. We also are committed to improving the health status of all Michigan residents, empowering them to take personal responsibility through awareness, education, and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices.

The Blues are committed to leading Michigan to a healthier future, and that means tackling childhood obesity. The Blues developed the Building Healthy Communities statewide grant program and also collaborated with Michigan State University College of Human Medicine to launch a \$1 million health initiative called Project FIT in West Michigan.

Listed below are some additional facts about the obesity epidemic and the Blues commitment to addressing childhood obesity, as well as background information on today's event.

### **Childhood Obesity – A Real Problem:**

- Obesity has risen to epidemic proportions in the United States and is now the second leading cause of preventable death.
- In a population-based sample of 5- to 17-year-olds, 70 percent of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
- Children and adolescents who are obese are at greater risk for bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem.
- The current generation may become the first in American history to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.
- Today, obese children and teenagers are developing obesity-related diseases, including coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, elevated cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes – diseases formerly only seen in adults.
- Obesity due to poor diet and lack of exercise is responsible for over 300,000 deaths each year.
- The annual cost to society for obesity is estimated at nearly \$100 billion.

# Appendix C: Sample Fact Sheet



## **What is BCBSM's Building Healthy Communities Grant Program?**

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is committed to leading Michigan to a healthier future. Since 2004, the Blues have awarded more than \$2.4 million in Building Healthy Communities grants to schools and community partners to address childhood obesity.
- More than 100,000 school children throughout Michigan have participated in the Building Healthy Communities initiative.
- The Building Healthy Communities Grant program is designed to strengthen school and community efforts to reduce the risk and prevalence of childhood obesity through prevention and partnership.
- The Building Healthy Communities grant program provides funding to schools for healthy eating and nutrition education, and physical activity programs in an effort to reduce childhood obesity.
- The Blues' efforts focus on children because lifestyle habits are formed at an early age. We're dedicated to curbing childhood obesity in Michigan by educating children about healthy lifestyle choices.

# Appendix D: Sample Media List

Media lists are developed to organize contact information for your local newspapers, television and radio stations. Media contacts change frequently, so it is helpful to store these contacts in Microsoft Excel allowing users to make frequent updates. This list will contain contact information for members of the media that you wish to send press releases.

Each school will receive an email with a media list for their area. Remember, media contacts change often, so the list will need to be updated regularly. A sample media list is included below.

First Name	Last Name	Outlet	Beat/Title	Media Type	Phone	City	Email
John	Foren	Flint Journal	Editor	Daily Newspaper	(810) 766-6382	Flint	jforen@flintjournal.com
John	Hiner	Flint Journal	Executive Editor	Daily Newspaper	(989) 894-9629	Flint	jhiner@bc-times.com
Allison	Shoup	WEYI-TV	News Assignment (Night)	Television Station	(810) 687-6900	Clio	news@nbc25.net
Jim	Bleicher	WJRT-TV	News Director	Television Station	(810) 257-2800	Flint	bleichj@abc.com
Gary	Gould	The Davison Index	Managing Editor	Community Newspaper	(810) 653-3511	Davison	ggould@viewnewspapers.net
Anna	Troppens	Tri-County Times	Associate Editor	Community Newspaper	(810) 629-8282	Fenton	atroppens@tctimes.com
John	Foren	Suburban Flint Newspaper Group	Editor	Community Newspaper Publisher	(810) 766-6382	Flint	jforen@flintjournal.com
Craig	Nelson	Genesee County Herald	Editor	Community Newspaper Publisher	(810) 686-3840	Clio	editor@myherald.net

# Appendix E: Healthy Living Flyer



## Lead Michigan to a Healthier future. Help your kids get healthy!

Learn how to improve your family's lifestyle and develop a healthy routine of eating right and exercising with the help of [aHealthierMichigan.org](http://aHealthierMichigan.org).

## Join the conversation at [aHealthierMichigan.org](http://aHealthierMichigan.org)

A Healthier You | A Healthier Business  
A Healthier Community | A Healthier Health Care System



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# Appendix F: Publication Release Form



**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan**  
**Blue Care Network of Michigan**  
**BCN Service Company**  
**BlueCaid of Michigan**  
600 East Lafayette, #0245  
Detroit, Michigan 48226  
(313) 983-1644 fax (313) 225-0659



## Publication Release

1. I give and grant to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and its subsidiaries listed above (BCBSM) the right to use and publish my name, picture, video or story in any print, electronic or other media.
2. I agree that:  
  
all photographs, videos and statements of me used and taken by BCBSM are owned by them and they may copyright material containing same. If I should receive any print, negative or other copy thereof, I shall not authorize its use by anyone else.  
  
no advertisement or other material need be submitted to me for any other approval and BCBSM shall not be liable to me for any distortion or illusionary effect resulting from the publication of my picture, portrait, video or likeness.
3. I warrant and represent that this license does not in any way conflict with any existing commitment on my part. I have not authorized nor will I authorize or permit the use of my name, picture, portrait, video, likeness or testimonial statement in connection with the advertising or promotion of any product or service competitive to or incompatible with BCBSM.
4. Nothing herein will constitute any obligation by BCBSM to make use of any of the rights set forth herein.

I hereby certify that I am twenty-one years of age or older. (If not twenty-one years of age or older, this document must be signed by a parent or guardian)\*\*\*

Print name

Signature

Date photographed or interviewed

Print street address

Scene description

Print City/state/zip code

Description of event

Phone number

Age (if minor)\*\*\*

\*\*\*I, the undersigned represent that I am the  mother  father  guardian of the minor named above and, as such, am fully authorized and entitled to enter into this agreement on his or her behalf.

Name of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan representative

Signature of minor's parent or guardian

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network of Michigan are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

Release.doc