



Anthem Blue Cross Foundation and Marjaree Mason Center Join Efforts to Reduce Pre-Term Births Among Pregnant Women Exposed to Domestic Violence

A \$400,000 grant from the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation supports a maternal health program in Fresno County that offers prenatal care, mental health support and help accessing services and resources.

FRESNO, Calif. (May 10, 2023) – Marjaree Mason Center (MMC) received a \$400,000 grant from the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation to reduce pre-term birth rates among pregnant women who have experienced domestic violence. The effort engages the MMC's Maternal Health Program, which is a collaborative project between MMC, UCSF Fresno and the Fresno County Department of Public Health that aims to reduce incidents of pre-term births and improve the overall health and well-being of mothers and babies by addressing their comprehensive needs. Anthem's grant will be used to offer prenatal care, mental health support, assistance navigating healthcare and social services, as well as education and resources to help women make informed decisions about their health and the health of their unborn babies.

"MMC expresses our heartfelt gratitude to the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation for ensuring that we have the resources to provide holistic care to expectant mothers," shared Nicole Linder, Marjaree Mason Center CEO. "The significant investment from Anthem, and partnership with UCSF Fresno and County of Fresno Public Health, will provide intensive care for mothers and babies during one of the most traumatic and lonely times in their lives."

Domestic violence is a pattern of abuse that impacts millions of individuals each year. Unfortunately, there are well-documented, negative long-term implications to early exposure to trauma. Experiencing domestic violence during pregnancy often leads to reduced prenatal care, which leads to low gestational weight gain, pre-term birth, and low infant birth weight. Additionally, it is common for the unborn baby to become an additional target of physical abuse in relationships experiencing domestic violence.

"Anthem Blue Cross and our Foundation have made significant investments to ensure women and their babies can achieve optimal health and well-being across the nation, in California, and in regions like Fresno County, where some of the greatest maternal health disparities persist," said Les Ybarra, President of Anthem's Medi-Cal health plan. "We recognize the critical role that MMC's Maternal Health Program plays in the lives of some of our most vulnerable Californians, and we are proud to be part of an effort that is making a positive impact on so many lives and building stronger, healthier communities."

The Maternal Health Program is available to pregnant women connected with MMC through one of its other emergency support programs. Twice a month, participants access assistance at clinics staffed by OB/GYNs from Central California Faculty Medical Group, the affiliated faculty medical group for UCSF Fresno. During each clinic visit, participants receive a mommy and baby bag that contains essential items to support their health and wellness. These include vitamins, pregnancy bands, and self-care items to support the mother's physical and emotional well-being. The bags also contain baby items such as diapers, wipes, newborn clothing, toys, bottles, and other necessities to support their healthy development.

"Our team carefully curates each bag to meet each clients' unique needs in order to meaningfully help the family throughout their pregnancy and early parenting journey," Linder added. "The mommy and baby bags are just one way we demonstrate our commitment to providing high-quality care to our clients and ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive."

Participants of MMC's Maternal Health Program are also supported by a public health nurse from the County of Fresno, who follows the women through their pregnancies and continues home care support six weeks after the baby is delivered. Since the soft launch of this program in 2022, five babies have been delivered to term, and there are currently 14 participants being supported.

To learn more about the programs and services offered by MMC, visit <https://mmcenter.org/what-we-do>.

To learn more about Anthem Blue Cross Foundation sponsorships and efforts, visit <https://elevancehealth.foundation/>.

ABOUT THE MARJAREE MASON CENTER

For over 40 years, the Marjaree Mason Center has offered safe housing and support services to adults and their children affected by domestic violence in Fresno County. As the only comprehensive domestic violence agency in Fresno County, the Marjaree Mason Center provides housing, legal advocacy, counseling, and education to survivors and youth. The Center was founded in 1979, after the murder of Marjaree Mason, a native of Easton. A graduate of Washington High School and Reedley College, Marjaree lived in Fresno for 31 years and was well-known in the community. To contact MMC, call the business center at 559.237.4706 and the 24-hour confidential emergency hotline at 559.233.HELP (4357) or help@mmcenter.org, or learn more online at www.mmcenter.org.

ABOUT ANTHEM BLUE CROSS FOUNDATION

The Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Association, is a philanthropic arm of the Elevance Health Foundation. The Foundation works to address health equity by focusing on improving the health of the socially vulnerable through strategic partnerships and programs in our communities with an emphasis on maternal child health; mental health; and food as medicine. Additionally, the Foundation also responds to disasters when our communities need us the most. The Foundation coordinates the company's year-round Dollars for Dollars program which provides a 100 percent match of associates' donations, as well as its Volunteer Time Off and Dollars for Doers community service programs. ®ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross names and symbol are registered marks of the Blue Cross Association. To learn more about the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation and the Elevance Health Foundation, please visit www.elevancehealth.foundation and its blog at www.medium.com/elevancehealthfoundation.

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