
Blue Shield of California Foundation announces support for the Institute for Healthcare Communication's new empathy training tool:

The Empathy Effect - Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes

New Haven, CT (Sept. 29, 2017) - As part of \$6 million allocated this quarter to address domestic violence and improve healthcare for low-income Californians, [Blue Shield of California Foundation](#) has awarded a grant to the [Institute for Healthcare Communication](#) (IHC) to continue development of a unique training tool and curriculum that will enhance provider capacity to deliver high-quality care with compassion and respect for every patient. The Foundation's ongoing support for this initiative is emblematic of their commitment to advancing health equity, safety and well-being for all Californians.

"This quarter's grants reflect an ongoing dedication to innovative organizations like the Institute for Healthcare Communication, whose work is clearly aligned with our core values and helps support the people and causes at the heart of our mission," said Peter Long, PhD, president and CEO of Blue Shield of California Foundation.

The curriculum for the successfully piloted workshop, [The Empathy Effect](#) (EE), was informed by research indicating that patient outcomes are influenced by how patients feel they are treated by their healthcare team members. Drawing on IHC's decades-long experience developing and conducting experiential communication skills-based training, the EE workshop was developed with the guidance of nationally renowned experts, and input from dedicated leaders and clinicians working in selected safety net organizations across California.

The EE workshop guides healthcare team members as they examine their own beliefs and biases that may inhibit compassionate and equitable care for all patients. The EE content enhances personal self-awareness and offers practical, evidenced-based communication skills to heighten patients' sense of perceived empathy and connectivity, as well as to improve employees' own experience of their work. The curriculum is broadly applicable to all patient interactions and focuses on care for those who suffer from conditions subject to stigma and substandard care, such as mental health and addictive disorders, chronic pain, trauma history, domestic violence and homelessness.

In the next phase of this project, IHC will develop a companion train-the-trainer (TTT) framework to support *The Empathy Effect* workshop, and pilot the TTT for selected individuals from a number of organizations across California. The TTT faculty course will enable caregiving organizations to sustain stigma reduction training efforts over the long term through the development of their own faculty for the EE program.

The EE TTT will be held in Sacramento, CA, in the week of November 13, 2017, and has commitment from [Alameda Health Consortium](#), [Community Medical Centers](#), [CenCal Health](#), [North Coast Clinics Network](#), [Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County](#), [Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust](#), and [Transitions-Mental Health Association](#). In early 2018, the EE TTT will be ready for rollout throughout North America.

About the Institute for Healthcare Communication

The IHC is a non-profit organization, which has been developing and disseminating evidence-based communication skills curricula for healthcare organizations since 1987. IHC's communication and coaching skills curricula are nationally accredited and widely accepted avenues for improving patient outcomes and satisfaction, enhancing patient adherence and outcomes and fostering greater healthcare team job satisfaction. For additional information about the programs and services offered by IHC, visit <http://healthcarecomm.org/>

About Blue Shield of California Foundation

Blue Shield of California Foundation is one of California's largest and most trusted grantmaking organizations. Its mission is to improve the lives of California's most vulnerable populations by making health care more accessible and effective, and by ending domestic violence. For additional information about the Foundation's grantmaking and impact visit: www.blueshieldcafoundation.org

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