



Aetna Better Health of Illinois Donates Refrigerators and Freezers to 30 Local Food Pantries

CARBONDALE, Ill. (June 2, 2021)—Aetna Better Health of Illinois, the Medicaid managed care business of Aetna®, a CVS Health® company (NYSE: CVS), today announced a collaboration with the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network (SIFPN) to provide \$138,000 worth of professional-grade refrigerators and freezers to 34 food pantries serving the southernmost 16 counties in Illinois.

According to [Southern Illinois Healthcare](#) (SIH), 80 percent of adults in Southern Illinois are not meeting recommended guidelines for daily fruit and vegetable intake. More than 45,000 Southern Illinoisans rely on their local food pantries to access food. In the past, local food pantries reported having to turn perishable donations away because they do not have the capacity to store these types of food.

Aetna’s donation of 51 refrigerators and freezers enables participating pantries to source more perishable and healthy items to distribute, as opposed to shelf-stable, non-perishable items. The pantries will distribute healthy and nutritious food such as fresh produce, dairy products and proteins to vulnerable populations of children and adults.

Southern Illinois Healthcare’s 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment also found that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Jackson, Williamson, Perry, Franklin, Union, Johnson and Saline counties, with 67 percent of adults 18 and older being overweight or obese; nearly 55 percent having high cholesterol; and seven to 15.2 percent having diabetes.

“Food insecurity leads to poor health outcomes,” said Kim Foltz, CEO, Aetna Better Health of Illinois. “The Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network and its partners provide a critical lifeline to healthy foods for families in hard-to-reach and underserved areas. With 25 percent of residents living in areas designated as food deserts, these pantries provide much needed access to healthy foods.”

The Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network and its network of pantries serve a total population of 330,000, a third whom are Medicaid recipients.

“This collaboration with Aetna Better Health of Illinois is helping us achieve our mission to reduce hunger and improve the health of our communities through increasing access to healthy and nutritious food,” said Toni Kay Wright, a representative of the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network. “We are excited to support more than 30 area food pantries in their efforts to increase cold storage in their food pantries and bring healthier fresh foods to their communities.”

“We are thankful for partners like the Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network and Aetna Better Health of Illinois for providing the refrigerator and freezer to our food pantry,” said Casey Pollard, The Table Food Pantry in Vienna, Ill. “Since the pandemic started, we have provided over 100,000 pounds of



food to families in need. Continued partnerships like these help us battle food insecurity across the region.”

Aetna Better Health of Illinois offers quality, affordable health care to individuals through the state’s HealthChoice Illinois Medicaid program. The health plan and serves nearly 400,000 members in 102 counties.

###

About Aetna Medicaid

Aetna Medicaid Administrators LLC (Aetna Medicaid), a CVS Health company, has over 30 years of experience managing the care of the most medically vulnerable, using innovative approaches and a local presence in each market to achieve both successful health care results and effective cost outcomes. Aetna Medicaid has particular expertise serving high-need Medicaid members, including those who are dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare. Currently, Aetna Medicaid owns and/or administers Medicaid managed health care plans under the names of Aetna Better Health and other affiliate names. Together, these plans serve approximately 2.8 million people in 16 states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Texas. For more information, see www.aetnabetterhealth.com.

Media contact

Leigh Woodward

860-900-6058

woodwardl1@cvshealth.com