

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ritter Center Awarded \$750,000 Grant from Anthem Blue Cross Foundation

Funds Will Expand Substance Use Disorder/Mental Health Treatment and Harm Reduction Programs in Marin County

San Rafael, CA – August 20, 2024 - Today Ritter Center announced it has been awarded a generous grant of \$750,000 from Anthem Blue Cross Foundation to significantly enhance the Substance Use Disorder/Mental Health Treatment and Harm Reduction Programs in Marin County for people experiencing homelessness and individuals with low incomes facing barriers to healthcare access. The grant will support an array of critical activities aimed at expanding care coordination and launching new harm reduction training programs, specifically targeting underserved local audiences.

“Ritter Center is deeply grateful for the support from Anthem Blue Cross Foundation and looks forward to making a lasting impact on the health and well-being of Marin County’s most vulnerable residents,” said Ritter Center CEO Mark Shotwell. “We believe in the potential of people who have faced challenges to reclaim their health and their lives. We all deserve to be treated with respect regardless of income or housing.”

The Anthem Blue Cross Foundation recently announced the expansion of its substance use disorder grants through an additional \$1.6 million in awards to seven California non-profit organizations. The multi-year grants will help those experiencing mental health and substance use disorders focusing on improving access to care, quality of treatment, and youth prevention and early intervention. Through this latest investment, the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation has awarded more than \$3.7 million to SUD programs in California.

“Substance use disorders continue to be a public health challenge that’s taking too big of a toll in our communities across the state and right here in Marin County,” said Anthem Blue Cross Commercial Plan President Beth Andersen. “Along with partners like the Ritter Center, we continue to take a holistic approach and invest in the mental health and well-being in our communities, particularly with a focus on helping those individuals who have a substance use disorder in underserved communities.”

Nearly half of Ritter Center’s patients identify as racial or ethnic minorities, and the organization remains dedicated to overcoming systemic barriers and improving access to care. The majority of Ritter Center’s patients live below the poverty line.

With the grant, a new Care Coordinator will be hired to work with Ritter Center's medical and behavioral health departments. This role will support screenings, provide warm hand-offs to healthcare providers, and assist with appointment scheduling for individuals who screen positive for these conditions. The Care Coordinator will also support patients in the Medication-Assisted Treatment program and coordinate follow-up care for individuals discharged from local hospitals and emergency departments, ensuring extensive follow-up and support.

A dedicated Substance Use Disorder Counselor will conduct weekly harm reduction training sessions across various locations in Marin County. The program aims to reach 3,617 participants, with 1,105 expected to achieve key health improvements.

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About Ritter Center:

Ritter Center is dedicated to preventing and resolving homelessness while enhancing the health, dignity, and well-being of individuals living in poverty in Marin County. Through its culturally sensitive, easily accessible medical care and social services, Ritter Center provides comprehensive support to those in need, regardless of their ability to pay. With over 40 years of experience, Ritter Center combines national clinical best practices with a holistic approach to addressing health, food, and housing needs. The organization collaborates closely with County agencies, health partners, and other like-minded organizations to create sustainable solutions that improve lives.

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.