

**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City
Brings Cost Savings and Administrative
Efficiencies to Kansas City Physicians and Hospitals**

Rollout of Real Time Healthcare Information Will Benefit Physicians and Patients

Kansas City, MO (April 19, 2011) - Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City announced today it is introducing a new information network to area healthcare providers that promotes efficiencies and reduces the cost of care administration in the Kansas City area. Availity, a leader in healthcare technology and information exchange, streamlines the administrative process between healthcare providers and health plans, freeing healthcare providers' staff from time-intensive phone and paper transactions and boosting overall productivity. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City is the first insurer in the area to provide this type of information network to healthcare providers.

The Availity Health Information Network simplifies many aspects of health plan administration - an important component of healthcare reform, and a critical step toward advancing affordable patient care. With Availity, physicians and healthcare facilities in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City's provider network will be able to quickly and easily monitor claims submissions, obtain insurance coverage information on patients, such as eligibility and benefits, and determine pre-care itemized cost estimates for specific treatments, all through a secure, collaborative internet-based exchange. At the same time, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City will begin rolling out real-time payment capabilities to physician offices, also through Availity.

Patients will benefit by having more accurate and timely information about their benefits and costs of care, allowing them to discuss those costs and budget, if appropriate, for their treatments.

David Gentile, president and chief executive officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, noted, "The Availity network is a key component in our ongoing efforts to strategically align with healthcare providers as we implement necessary business enhancements over the next few years to impact quality health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs. It's one of several current and planned initiatives already underway to meet these objectives."

"Our rollout of the Availity network demonstrates our continued commitment to the healthcare providers in this community. We have had a collaborative relationship with area physicians for many years, and we're confident this offering will further enhance that already strong relationship," noted Blake Williamson, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City.

"Metro Med is very appreciative of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City for rolling out this cutting edge solution which will increase transparency in patients' costs as well as ease the amount of back-office staff time in all physician offices," said John C. Hagan, III, M.D., immediate past president of the Metropolitan Medical Society. "This project started at the request of a member's office and with the support of our Board and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, we are thrilled to see Availity roll out."

Brian Burns, senior vice president of Health Care Services and Chief Contracting Officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, said, "The introduction of Availity is a great example of how our company is on the forefront of creating innovative and efficient ways to reduce healthcare costs, while helping our

network healthcare providers simplify the administrative aspects of their practices. In addition, Availity is a multi-payer solution, which allows healthcare professionals to use it for all health plans with which they work, rather than having to manage several sets of phone, paper or online contacts."

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City introduced Availity to a pilot group of physician practices (including those in its Patient-Centered Medical Home pilot project) to very positive results in January 2011.

As part of its Availity rollout to network physicians and healthcare facilities, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City will be providing card swipe devices for reading the magnetic strip on the back of patient insurance ID cards, which will help speed a patient's experience upon check-in. These magnetic strips contain coverage and other information helpful to the physicians and hospitals. The card reader solution costs nothing for physicians and hospitals, and will help them save money through its efficiencies and streamlined approach to traditionally time-consuming administrative tasks. The rollout will occur in phases, beginning with healthcare specialists, who initially will reap the greatest benefits from the system, and will move to healthcare facilities and primary care providers next.

Julie Klapstein, chief executive officer for Availity, says response to the Kansas City pilot has been outstanding and is reflective of the value provided by the network. "Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City is taking a progressive stance in offering such a powerful tool to physicians and hospitals, and patients will be the ultimate beneficiaries. In actively pursuing ways to improve the provider-patient experience, they are creating efficiency across the healthcare delivery system."

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Ask me about Availity. I would be happy to come out and explain further.

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