



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Excellus BlueCross BlueShield pledges major grant to fund lifesaving cardiac care equipment for ambulances**

UTICA, N.Y. — Excellus BlueCross BlueShield today pledged a \$120,000 grant to the Mohawk Valley Heart Institute to purchase and distribute lifesaving cardiac care equipment for municipal and volunteer ambulance companies. The equipment will help speed the diagnosis and treatment of individuals experiencing heart attack symptoms.

The funding from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield will place 37, 12-lead electrocardiogram modems and software in ambulances across Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties. The 12-lead ECG modems will allow first responders to transmit vital diagnostic information directly from individuals who have an acute myocardial infarction or heart attack symptoms to hospital emergency departments. The advance data sent via a 12-lead ECG can speed triage and treatment once the patient arrives at the hospital, lowering a patient's risk of death and serious damage to the heart muscle.

"Providing access to high-quality health care for people who need it is core to our mission as a nonprofit health plan," said Eve Van de Wal, regional president of Excellus BlueCross BlueShield. "We're pleased to partner with the Mohawk Valley Heart Institute to expand the availability of lifesaving diagnostic technology to our neighbors in the community."

According to the American Heart Association, each year about 250,000 Americans suffer the most serious type of heart attack — myocardial infarction with ST-segment elevation — caused by obstructed blood flow to the heart due to a blocked artery. Having portable ECG modems in ambulances lets first responders wirelessly transmit results ahead to the hospital, giving the hospital time to mobilize a cardiac care team well before the patient arrives.

"With 16 years of experience, Mohawk Valley Heart Institute (MVHI) is an early example of collaboration between Utica hospitals, St. Elizabeth Medical Center and Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare," said Albert D'Accurzio, MD, senior vice president/chief medical officer and chief quality officer for Mohawk Valley Health System. "Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's grant will allow our Emergency Departments to work with local Emergency Medical Services to get patients the quickest and most effective treatment possible. This equipment will help us advance patient care and save lives."

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield funds will underwrite the purchase of Physio-Control Life Pak modems and base software. The emergency department and cardiac catheterization labs at St. Elizabeth Medical Center and Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare will be equipped to receive 12-lead ECG transmissions through the Physio-Control system. The grant will also allow up to 37 ambulances in Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties to use the mobile technology.

"The Midstate Emergency Medical Services Council strives to provide its community with excellent patient care and safe, efficient transport of the sick and injured," said Vinny Faraone, EMS clinical coordinator, Midstate

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Emergency Medical Services Council. "I thank Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, the Mohawk Valley Heart Institute and neighboring hospitals for supporting this initiative. When every second counts, having portable electrocardiogram equipment more widely available in local ambulances will save time, which will translate to saved lives."

Funding for the 12-lead ECG modems comes from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's Community and Member Health Improvement program. This program provides grants to initiatives that involve numerous community partners, span multiple years, and include specific objectives and measurable outcomes in improving health. Preference is given to efforts that focus on the areas of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, medication compliance and/or patient safety.

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*Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, a nonprofit independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association, is part of a family of companies that finances and delivers vital health care services to about 1.9 million people across upstate New York. Excellus BlueCross BlueShield provides access to high-quality, affordable health coverage, including valuable health-related resources that our members use every day, such as cost-saving prescription drug discounts and wellness tracking tools in our Step Up program. To learn more, visit [excellusbcbcs.com](http://excellusbcbcs.com).*

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*Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) is the parent organization of Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare (FSLH) and St. Elizabeth Medical Center (SEMC), two not-for-profit healthcare organizations in Utica, NY. The two organizations in the MVHS system employ nearly 4,300 employees and have combined operating budgets of \$537 million.*