



News Release

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Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota awarded grant through the Blue Cross Foundation

Grant helps create greater health equity in the community

Bemidji, Minn. (July 15, 2015) —Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM) received a \$90,000 grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation to help more community members reach their full health potential. The funds will be used to create a medical/legal partnership between LSNM and the Northern Dental Access Center. The project will provide resources for patients at the dental clinic to address the legal and social issues that are compromising their health and ability to follow a treatment plan and receive appropriate dental treatment. With guidance and resources, the partners will develop screening tools, train medical and dental staff to identify the client’s legal needs, and build awareness among patients of their legal rights.

The Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota’s grant is one of 24 awarded across the state through Healthy Communities: Healthy Equity in Action. The projects all focus on one or more of the following social or economic factors that have a great influence on health: education, employment, income, family and social support or community safety. A total of \$1.5 million was awarded.

“We’re pleased to support the great work of Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota and the Northern Dental Access Center — a community asset that is truly making a difference in helping people have better options for good health,” said Foundation Executive Director Carolyn Link. “Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota and the Northern Dental Access Center demonstrate a commitment to broadening the way we look at health.”

"This is another example of how our community can partner to reduce barriers for patients most in need," says Northern Dental's Executive Director, Jeanne Edevold Larson. "We have learned over the years that health disparities can be a result of unresolved legal issues."

LSNM is a non-profit organization that provides legal services without charge to low-income or elderly citizens. LSNM provides high quality legal representation and community legal education to low-income and elderly persons in 22 northwestern Minnesota counties, using three staffed law offices and approximately 210 private Judicare attorneys. Representation focuses on priority cases, generally those most critical to life, health, safety, shelter, and basic subsistence income.

Northern Dental Access Center opened in 2009 with the mission of providing access to dental home for people in need. Dental care and other patient support services are provided to

families who meet income eligibility guidelines or who are enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs such as Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare.

For more information on Blue Cross' grantmaking programs, visit bcbsmnfoundation.org or call (651) 662-3950 or toll free at 1-866-812-1593.

The [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation](https://bcbsmnfoundation.org) exclusively dedicates its assets to improving health in Minnesota, awarding nearly \$41.5 million since it was established in 1986. The Foundation's purpose is to make a healthy difference in communities by advancing health equity and improving the conditions where people live, learn, work and play.