

Cigna Foundation Commits \$100,000 to Help High School Students Make Healthier Choices through Peer Health Exchange

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., 15 March, 2019 - The Cigna Foundation announced a \$100,000 grant to Peer Health Exchange, an organization that works with under-resourced high schools in major cities to supplement or provide health education by bringing together high school students and college peers.

The unique program equips high school students with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to make healthier choices and navigate the health systems in their communities. With this grant, more than 18,000 ninth graders in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco will now participate in the program, where college students deliver important health information to high schoolers. Working together, students learn important skills that help them better take care of their physical and mental health including decision-making, communication and advocacy.

“To make health care more sustainable, we need to go deep into local communities to put our young people on a healthier path to support both their physical and mental well-being. In partnership with Peer Health Exchange and communities, we will help young people achieve more positive and equitable health outcomes,” said Susan Stith, executive director, Cigna Foundation.

Peer Health Exchange college health educators lead candid conversations about high school students’ choices and health. The organization sets diversity standards to ensure college health educators closely share the backgrounds and life experiences of the young people they are serving in high schools.

“Partnering and working with young people to identify and remove barriers that keep them from accessing health resources is critical to our work. We rely on these partnerships to improve health outcomes for young people and advance our vision for health equity,” said Dr. Angela Glymph, Peer Health Exchange vice president of programs and strategic learning.

Health educators create trusting relationships with students, connecting them to existing health resources. Where possible, Peer Health Exchange workshops integrate tours of school-based health centers, introducing students to staff and services and helping them access the preventive care they need.

About Peer Health Exchange

Peer Health Exchange began in 1999, when six Yale undergraduates began teaching health workshops in New Haven public schools to fill the gap left by an underfunded, understaffed district health program. In 2003, the founding members of the group established Peer Health Exchange to replicate this successful program in other communities with unmet health education needs. Since 2003, Peer Exchange has trained more than 10,000 college student volunteers to deliver health education to more than 149,000 public high school students in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, go to www.peerhealthexchange.org

About the Cigna Foundation

The Cigna Foundation, founded in 1962, is a private foundation funded by contributions from Cigna Corporation (NYSE:CI) and its subsidiaries. The Cigna Foundation supports organizations sharing its commitment to enhancing the health of individuals and families, and the well-being of their communities, with a special focus on those communities where Cigna employees live and work.