



## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Meridian Supports Illinois Communities in Need During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Partnerships help address hunger, food insecurity, and access to essential supplies*

**CHICAGO (May 4, 2020)** – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people across Illinois are facing challenges that extend beyond medical care. These challenges include basic daily needs such as access to food and essential healthcare and educational supplies. Meridian, a subsidiary of Centene Corporation, a leading multi-national healthcare company, is deploying these programs across the state.

Social determinants of health are non-medical barriers to achieving quality health outcomes. They include socioeconomic and environmental factors such as food accessibility, employment, education and more. Research shows that medical care accounts for approximately [10 to 20%](#) of health outcomes, while the other 80 to 90% is affected by social determinants of health.

“The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are far-reaching and have extended beyond medical care to affect access to food, education and other critical resources across our state,” said Karen Brach, Meridian Plan President and CEO for Illinois. “These social determinants of health have a significant impact on overall wellbeing, especially among vulnerable populations, and Meridian wants to help ensure we’re supporting the needs of our communities during this challenging time.”

#### **Hunger and Food Insecurity**

The demand on food banks has significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Feeding America](#), a national hunger relief nonprofit, estimates these organizations will need an additional \$1.4 billion in funding during the next six months to provide food assistance to people facing hunger. In partnership with Feeding America, Centene and Meridian will coordinate a [donation](#) of 1 million meals a month for the next 12 months to feed those in Illinois and across the country.

Meridian also donated \$80,000 to The Salvation Army, Northern Illinois Food Bank, and Greater Chicago Food Depository to support food-funding in local communities across the state.

"This donation is essential to The Salvation Army's mission to serve those most vulnerable during this dangerous time," said Major David Dalberg, director of The Salvation Army's Emergency Disaster Services in the Chicagoland area. "Partners like Meridian help bring hope and help during very trying times, and for that, we are most grateful."

#### **Healthcare and Educational Supplies**

Meridian also purchased more than \$96,000 worth of Walmart gift cards for use on essential healthcare and educational supplies. Each gift card holds a value of \$35 and can be used to purchase essential items like diapers, over-the-counter medicines, cleaning supplies and books.

Meridian is partnering with the following local community-based organizations to distribute the gift cards:



- East Side Health District
- The Salvation Army
- Rural Health, Inc.
- Apostolic Church of God
- Kristen Berchtold Phoenix Community Development Services
- Safer Foundation
- Housing Opportunity for Women (HOW)
- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Meridian is committed to supporting its members during the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more, visit <https://corp.mhplan.com/en/covid-19/>.



*Photo caption: Top right: Karen Brach, Meridian Plan President and CEO for Illinois, delivers Walmart gift cards to The Salvation Army to help those in need access essential healthcare and educational supplies during the COVID-19 crisis.*



*On April 29, East Side Health District staff members were pleased to receive Walmart gift cards to distribute to community members in need.*

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### **About Meridian**

Meridian in Illinois and WellCare of Illinois provide government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors and individuals with complex medical needs primarily through Medicaid (MeridianHealth), Medicare Advantage (WellCare), Medicare-Medicaid Alignment Initiative (MeridianComplete) and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (WellCare) across the state. Meridian and WellCare are wholly owned subsidiaries of Centene Corporation, a leading multi-national healthcare enterprise committed to helping people live healthier lives. For more information about Meridian, please visit [www.mhplan.com](http://www.mhplan.com). For more information about WellCare, please visit [www.wellcare.com/illinois](http://www.wellcare.com/illinois).

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