

NEWS RELEASE**BCBSNC Contact:** Darcie Dearth • 919-765-3005 • Darcie.Dearth@bcbsnc.com**BCBSNC Online Newsroom:** <http://mediacenter.bcbsnc.com>**FastMed Contact:** Kevin Blank • 860-539-0541 • K.Blank@fastmed.com**For Immediate Release:** Sept. 12, 2012**BCBSNC and FastMed Join Forces to Expand
ER Alternatives Across North Carolina***New urgent care centers to offer customers significant time and cost savings*

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. – Patients across North Carolina often spend more than four hours during an emergency room (ER) visit¹, at a total average cost of nearly \$1,500 per visit.² Thousands of these patients visit ERs each year for non-emergency health concerns that can be effectively treated at urgent care clinics³, at an average cost of \$142.² That's why Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) is making an investment to enable FastMed Urgent Care to expand its network of physician-owned urgent care clinics across the state, while helping to launch innovative programs and services for BCBSNC customers. This strategic collaboration increases access to convenient, high quality urgent care while reining in medical costs.

“We need solutions that provide the right care, at the right time and in the right setting to build a more efficient health care system,” said Brad Wilson, BCBSNC president and CEO. “FastMed’s doctors and staff already provide high quality, more affordable care to our customers across the state. Working together, we can offer North Carolinians even more choices for convenient, cost-effective care.”

BCBSNC data shows that ER use has consistently increased over the past decade, significantly increasing the overall cost of health care:³

- More than 20 percent of ER visits are for non-emergencies.
- Non-emergency ER visits represent nearly 14 percent of all emergency room claims paid by BCBSNC.
- A 5-percent shift from ER use to urgent care centers could reduce medical spending by \$8 million annually.⁴
- The average cost of an urgent care clinic is 90 percent lower than an average ER visit.

FastMed Urgent Care, headquartered in Clayton, N.C., is the largest urgent care company in North Carolina and the second largest urgent care company in Arizona. Expecting more than 320,000 patient visits to its clinics in 2012, FastMed Urgent Care clinics help fill the gap between primary care and hospital ER visits. The patient-focused clinics are equipped with the latest health care technology including electronic medical records, electronic prescriptions and

¹ Emergency Department Pulse Report, 2010. Patient Perspectives on American Health Care. Press Ganey Associates.

² BCBSNC data, February 2012. Applies to fully insured individuals and groups.

³ BCBSNC data, May 2011.

⁴ BCBSNC data show 5-percent reduction in ER claims would amount to \$8.36 million in annual savings for underwritten group and individual customers.

digital X-rays. Many clinics also provide on-site pharmacy services. Clinic staff can perform procedures like splinting and suturing, as well as treat cuts, burns, sprains and fractures and respiratory illnesses to avoid a visit to the ER.

FastMed clinics offer patient-centered care that includes:

- Significantly lower out-of-pocket costs compared to an average ER visit. Out-of-pocket costs vary according to a patient's insurance plan.⁵
- An average visit, including wait time, of less than one hour for more than 95 percent of all patients.
- Online reservations to minimize wait times.
- Clean and organized facilities, including separate waiting areas for well patients.

"We are focused on serving patients, providing both basic care and innovative services, to meet their needs," said John Randazzo, FastMed CEO. "People want access to affordable options for care and excellent service without compromising quality. We are pleased to work with BCBSNC to take patient-focused health care to the next level for patients in the markets we serve."

FastMed provides convenient care to patients with non-emergency health concerns. Clinics are open on weekends and for extended hours during the week, 365 days per year. To learn more about urgent care centers, visit www.bcbssc.com/urgent or follow BCBSNC and FastMed on Twitter @BCBSNC or @FastMedClinics.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is a leader in delivering innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.6 million members, including approximately 900,000 served on behalf of other Blue Plans. For 78 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute in 2012. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit BCBSNC online at www.bcbssc.com.

About FastMed:

FastMed Urgent Care is a North Carolina-based network of physician-owned Clinics with locations throughout North Carolina and Arizona. The Clinics focus on the delivery of non-appointment based medicine to the non-emergency patient market. The Clinics are open 365 days a year and are staffed with experienced and licensed physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners. FastMed is managed by an affiliated entity of one of the investment funds of the Comvest Group, a leading private investment firm focused on providing equity and debt capital to lower middle-market companies. For more information, please visit www.fastmed.com.

About the Comvest Group:

The Comvest Group, with \$1.2 billion of assets under management, provides flexible financing solutions to lower middle-market companies through its equity and debt funds, often meeting time-critical and complex funding requirements. Our firm includes seasoned, senior level operating executives who partner with managers and owners of companies to operationally improve businesses and create long-term value. Since 2000, Comvest has invested more than \$1.5 billion of capital in over 105 public and private companies. For more information, please visit www.comvest.com.

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⁵ BCBSNC data, 2012. Total average charges are \$130 for a FastMed Urgent Care clinic visit compared to the \$1,500 average cost of an ER visit. Out-of-pocket costs vary according to a patient's insurance plan.