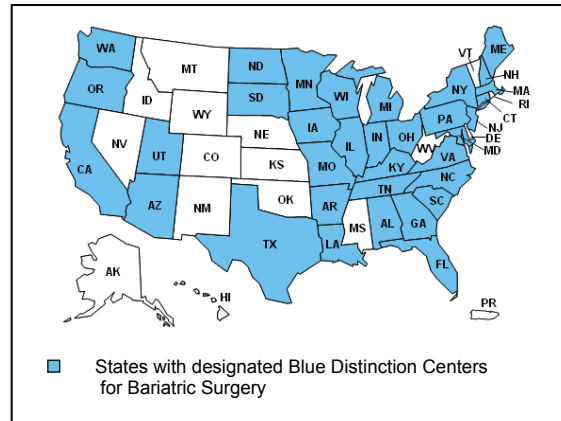




## Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery<sup>SM</sup> Program Description

Blue Distinction<sup>®</sup> recognizes facilities that meet objective, evidence-based thresholds for clinical quality, developed in collaboration with expert clinicians and leading professional organizations. At the core of Blue Distinction are the Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care<sup>SM</sup>, providing Blue members with a credible, easily identifiable means of selecting facilities that meet their individual healthcare needs.

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery consist of designated facilities that offer comprehensive bariatric surgery services. To date, we have designated more than 200 facilities nationwide that meet our objective quality thresholds.

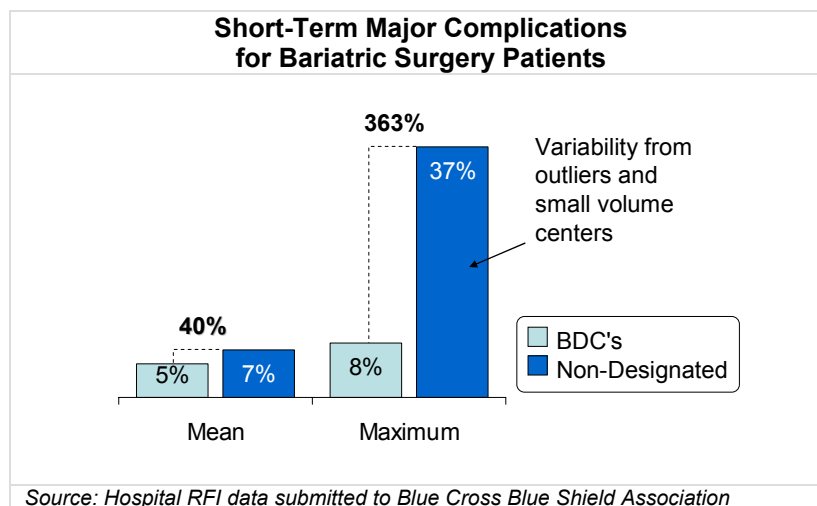


In determining the selection criteria, we collaborated with organizations including the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) and Surgical Review Corporation (SRC).<sup>\*</sup> Potential Blue Distinction Centers then submit data to establish that they meet our selection criteria. Among many other items, each facility must offer:

- an acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care and emergency room services
- an established bariatric program, actively performing these procedures for the most recent 12-month period and performing a required minimum volume of 125 such surgeries annually
- sustained excess weight loss (EWL) of greater than 50% at two years post-surgery for at least 90% of patients
- adequate experience and credentialing of its bariatric surgery team
- acceptably low overall complication and mortality rates
- documented patient care and follow up care procedures from admission through discharge, including long-term follow up post-surgery
- full accreditation by The Joint Commission or Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program (HFAP)
- a comprehensive quality management program that specifically incorporates bariatric surgery

Our complete list of selection criteria is publicly available at [www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction](http://www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction), providing consumers with support for their healthcare decisions and facilities with a clinically validated path for quality improvement. Re-evaluating Blue Distinction Centers on a regular basis helps promote ongoing quality.

To date, 1,315 of the nation's bariatric surgery facilities have been nominated by local Blue companies for consideration as Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery. Forty-nine percent of those nominated facilities submitted an application that met our selection criteria and were designated as Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery. Overall, the variance in short-term complications for bariatric patients at designated Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery versus non-designated facilities is statistically significant, as illustrated by the following example:



Blue companies continue to work proactively with facilities that are not designated Blue Distinction, providing detailed report cards indicating areas for improvement. The goal is to improve quality for the entire Blue network – which includes 90% of the nation's hospitals.

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery, along with the Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care<sup>SM</sup>, Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants<sup>SM</sup> and Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers<sup>SM</sup>, are a key part of the Blues' efforts to collaborate with physicians and facilities to improve the overall quality, and resulting affordability, of specialty care.

#### For additional information:

To obtain more information about the Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery, please contact your local Blue Cross and Blue Shield company or the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association at 800-810-BLUE, or visit [www.BCBS.com/bluedistinction](http://www.BCBS.com/bluedistinction).\*\*

\* These organizations have provided information and input, but do not formally endorse the Blue Distinction Centers program.

\*\* Some Blue companies may already participate in local bariatric programs. The Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery do not disrupt or replace these existing programs. Blue members (who have coverage for bariatric services) may not necessarily be required to use institutions that are part of this program.

Note: Designation as Blue Distinction Centers means these facilities' overall experience and aggregate data met objective criteria established in collaboration with expert clinicians' and leading professional organizations' recommendations. Individual outcomes may vary. To find out which services are covered under your policy at any facilities, please call your local Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plan.