

**FACT SHEET: Blue Distinction®**

Since inception in 2006, Blue Distinction has recognized facilities that meet objective, evidence-based thresholds for clinical quality, developed in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations. At the core of Blue Distinction are the Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care®, providing Blue members with a credible means of identifying hospitals that meet their individual healthcare needs for select procedures and conditions.

To date, we have focused on four areas of specialty care in our development of Blue Distinction Centers®: bariatric surgery, cardiac care, complex and rare cancers and transplants -- identifying more than 800 centers across the nation that meet the criteria posted for the public on BCBS.com.

	Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®	Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers <sup>SM</sup>
Types of Conditions/Procedures Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass</li> <li>▪ Vertical Banded Gastroplasty</li> <li>▪ Biliopancreatic Bypass</li> <li>▪ Biliopancreatic Bypass w/ Duodenal Switch</li> <li>▪ Adjustable Gastric Banding</li> <li>▪ Gastric Sleeve Resection</li> <li>▪ Revision of gastric restrictive procedures initially performed for morbid obesity. (<i>The initial procedure may have been performed at another institution.</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inpatient cardiac care</li> <li>▪ Cardiac rehabilitation</li> <li>▪ Cardiac catheterization, including percutaneous coronary interventions (PCI)</li> <li>▪ Cardiac surgery, including coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Heart</li> <li>▪ Lung (deceased and living donor)</li> <li>▪ Combination heart/lung</li> <li>▪ Liver (deceased and living donor)</li> <li>▪ Simultaneous pancreas kidney (SPK)</li> <li>▪ Pancreas (PAK/PTA)</li> <li>▪ Bone marrow/stem cell (autologous &amp; allogenic)</li> </ul>	Inpatient surgical treatment for 13 complex and rare subtypes of cancer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bladder</li> <li>▪ Bone – primary</li> <li>▪ Brain – primary</li> <li>▪ Esophageal</li> <li>▪ Gastric</li> <li>▪ Head and Neck</li> <li>▪ Liver – primary</li> <li>▪ Ocular Melanoma</li> <li>▪ Pancreatic</li> <li>▪ Rectal</li> <li>▪ Soft Tissue Sarcomas</li> <li>▪ Thyroid – medullary or anaplastic</li> <li>▪ Acute Leukemia (inpatient, non-surgical)</li> </ul>

	Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®	Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers <sup>SM</sup>
Collaborators on Development of Selection Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American College of Surgeons (ACS)</li> <li>American Society for Metabolic &amp; Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)</li> <li>Surgical Review Corporation (SRC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American College of Cardiology (ACC)</li> <li>Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research (CIBMTR®)</li> <li>Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR)</li> <li>Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN)</li> </ul>
<p>Sampling of Key Selection Criteria (refer to <a href="http://www.BCBS.com">www.BCBS.com</a> for complete lists)</p> <p><i>Criteria are categorized by structure, process and outcomes measures</i></p>	<p><b>Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established bariatric program, performing these procedures for the preceding 12 months and performing a required volume (a minimum of 125) of the surgeries annually</li> <li>an acute care inpatient facility including intensive care and emergency room services</li> </ul> <p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documented patient care and follow-up care procedures</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acceptable re-admission, 30-day reoperation and mortality rates</li> <li>a greater than 50% sustained excess weight loss (EWL) at two years post-surgery for at least 90% of patients</li> </ul> <p><i>These criteria were established in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p><b>Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established cardiac care program, performing a required volume of the procedures annually, e.g., a minimum of 125 open adult cardiac surgeries annually</li> <li>adequate experience and credentialing of their team, including sub-specialty board-certification for interventional cardiologists and cardiac surgeons</li> </ul> <p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documented patient care and follow-up care procedures</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acceptably low complication and mortality rates</li> </ul> <p><i>These criteria were established in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p><b>Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established transplant program, performing these procedures for the preceding 24 months and performing a required volume of transplant procedures</li> <li>adequate experience and credentialing of their transplant team</li> </ul> <p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documented patient care and follow up care procedures, including referral back to primary care physicians</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluation of patient and graft aggregate outcomes</li> </ul> <p><i>These criteria were established in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p><b>Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established inpatient surgical cancer programs, with multidisciplinary sub-specialty teams, for 13 complex and rare subtypes of cancer, performing minimum volume thresholds of cancer-related surgical procedures for at least the last four years</li> <li>documentation of multidisciplinary sub-specialty team member training – specialized cancer fellowships, certifications</li> <li>accreditation/certification by established cancer quality organizations</li> </ul> <p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documented inpatient surgical cancer programs, with multidisciplinary treatment planning and follow-up, including multidisciplinary sub-specialty care team involvement during tumor boards and patient treatment</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluation of annual case volume and mortality rates</li> </ul> <p><i>These criteria were established in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>
Number of Blue Distinction Center Designations (As of December 10, 2008)	272	441	84 (represents 304 specific transplant programs)	90

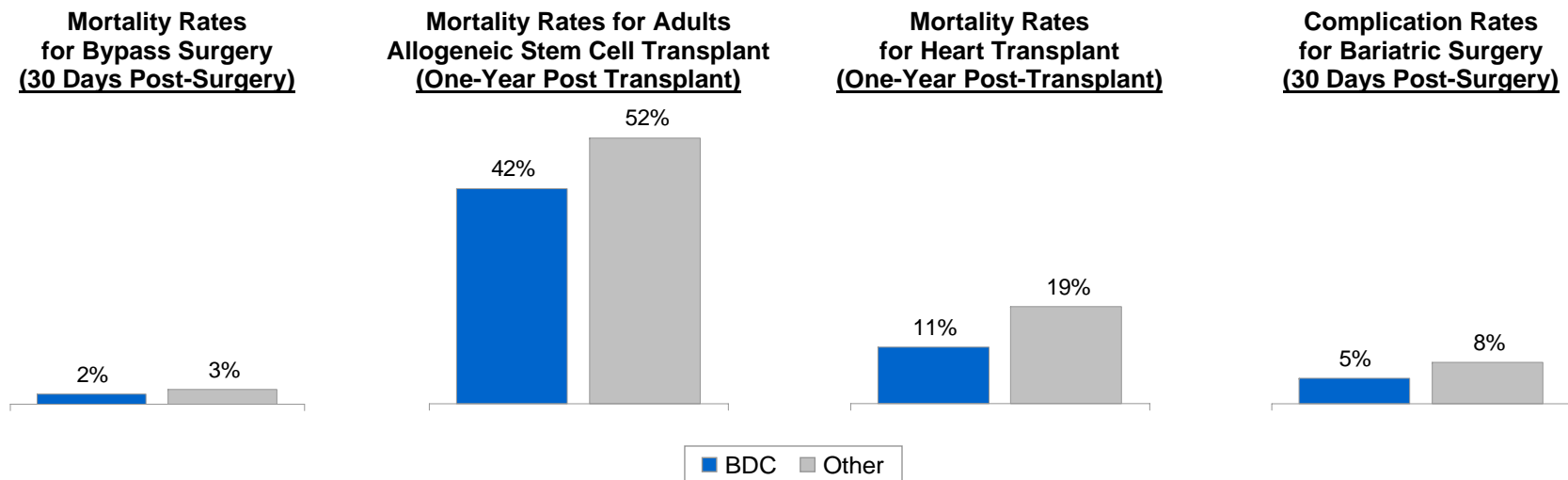
	Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®	Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers <sup>SM</sup>
Number of States with Blue Distinction Centers	41	40 (and the District of Columbia)	32	33 (and the District of Columbia)
States with at Least One Blue Distinction Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AL, AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, WA, WI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IL, IN, IA, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OH, OR, PA, RI, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI</li> </ul>
Additional Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operational since 2006</li> <li>▪ The recredentialing and new applicant processes incorporate a set of new RFI criteria</li> <li>▪ Newly designated and redesignated facilities were announced on June 3, 2008</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operational since 2006</li> <li>▪ The recredentialing and new applicant processes will incorporate a set of new RFI criteria (beginning May 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operational since 1991</li> <li>▪ This network includes global pricing, which provides added predictability in pricing; analyses of financial savings at the individual and aggregate levels; global claims support and case management, including referrals as needed</li> <li>▪ The recredentialing and new applicant processes will incorporate a set of new RFI criteria (beginning in 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operational since March 2008</li> </ul>

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

## What differentiates Blue Distinction Centers?

- **Transparency** - Our methodologies for selecting Blue Distinction Centers are transparent to consumers, employers and providers
- **Collaboration** - We've worked in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations to establish nationally consistent and evidence-based quality criteria
- **Quality** - Our evaluation is not based on claims data, rather we take a more holistic look at quality, including measures of structure, processes and outcomes based on self reported clinical data from hospitals and registries
- **Access** - The focus is on maintaining and enhancing, not narrowing, access to quality providers
- **Results** – Early research indicates that Blue Distinction Centers demonstrate better, more consistent overall outcomes as illustrated below:

## Results from RFI Clinical Data – Patient Outcomes



Results shown are mean values. Mortality rates for bypass surgery and heart transplant are risk-adjusted.

Source: BCBSA Analysis of 2005-06 Hospital RFI Data. Bone marrow transplant data based on actuarial data. Heart transplant data include facility results abstracted from the Scientific Registry for Transplant Recipients.

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery, Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care, Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers and Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants are a key part of The Blues<sup>®</sup> efforts to collaborate with physicians and facilities to improve the overall quality, and resulting affordability, of specialty care. We look forward to expanding the Blue Distinction program in 2009, to include new Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care that will focus on spine surgery and joint replacement. To find out more information, please visit [www.BCBS.com/bluedistinction](http://www.BCBS.com/bluedistinction).

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.