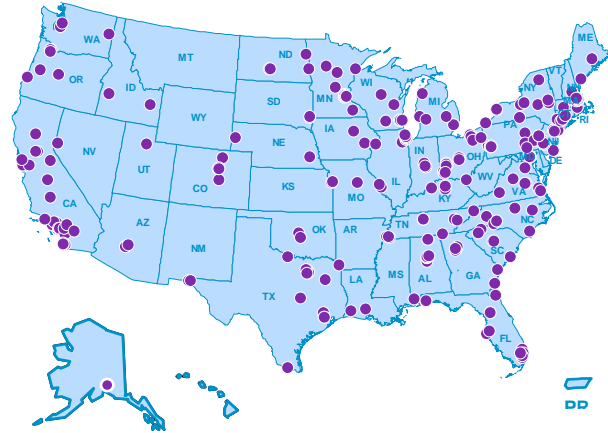


Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery® Program Description

Blue Distinction® recognizes 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, easily identifiable means of selecting facilities that meet their individual healthcare needs.



Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery have demonstrated their commitment to quality care, resulting in better overall outcomes for bariatric surgery patients. They offer comprehensive bariatric surgery care services, including inpatient care, post-operative care, outpatient follow-up care and patient education. To date, we have designated more than 270 facilities nationwide that meet our evidence-based selection criteria.

In determining the selection criteria for Blue Distinction, we collaborated with physician experts and medical organizations such as the American College of Surgeons (ACS), American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) and the Surgical Review Corporation (SRC).* Potential Blue Distinction Centers® submit clinical data to establish that they meet our selection criteria, which include:

- an established bariatric surgery program, actively performing these procedures for the most recent 12-month period and performing a required minimum volume of 125 such surgeries annually
- appropriate experience of its bariatric surgery team
- an acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care and emergency services
- full facility accreditation by a CMS-deemed national accreditation organization
- a comprehensive quality management program

Detailed selection criteria are publicly available at www.BCBS.com/bluedistinction, providing consumers with support for their healthcare decisions and facilities with a clinically established path for quality improvement.

To maintain its Blue Distinction Center designation, each facility must reapply periodically for re-designation. This not only encourages continuing quality at the facility level, but it also provides an opportunity for The Blues® to work with expert physicians and medical organizations to determine if any of the Blue Distinction quality thresholds should be raised to reflect current clinical practice. This process fosters ongoing opportunities for improving the overall quality of care.

To date, more than 1,300 of the nation's bariatric surgery facilities have been nominated by local Blue companies for potential designation as Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery. More than 30 percent of the facilities that submitted an application met our selection criteria and were designated as Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery.

Blue companies continue to work proactively with facilities that do not receive the Blue Distinction designation, providing feedback reports detailing areas for improvement. Our goal is to improve quality for the entire Blue network, which includes 90 percent of the nation's hospitals.

Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery, along with the Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care[®], Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers[®], Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip ReplacementSM, Blue Distinction Centers for Spine SurgerySM and Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants[®] 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 visit 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.



**BlueCross BlueShield
Association**

An Association of Independent
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans