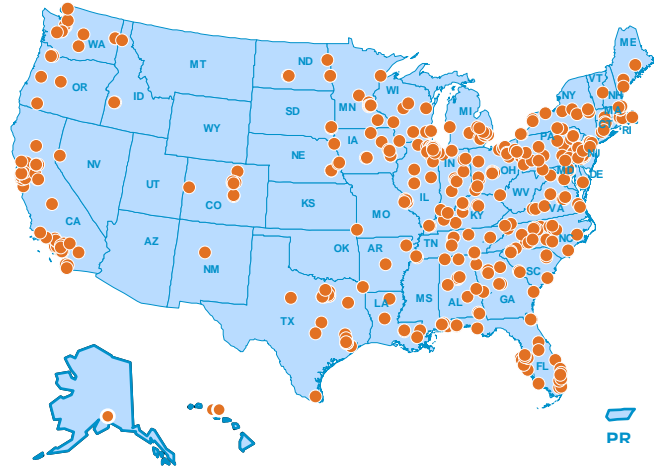


Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care® Program Description

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 Cardiac Care have demonstrated their commitment to quality care, resulting in better overall outcomes for cardiac patients. They offer comprehensive cardiac care services, including inpatient cardiac care, cardiac rehabilitation, cardiac catheterization (including percutaneous coronary interventions [PCI]) and cardiac surgery (including coronary artery bypass graft surgery [CABG]). To date, we have designated more than 400 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 Cardiology (ACC) and the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS).* Potential Blue Distinction Centers® submit clinical data to establish that they meet our selection criteria, which include:

- an established cardiac care program, performing required annual volumes for certain procedures (e.g. a minimum of 125 cardiac surgical procedures annually, including both CABG and/or valve surgery)
- appropriate experience of its cardiac team, including sub-specialty board certification for interventional cardiologists and cardiac surgeons
- an established acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care, emergency and a full range of cardiac services
- full facility accreditation by a CMS-deemed national accreditation organization
- low overall complication and mortality rates
- a comprehensive quality management program

Detailed selection criteria are available publicly 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 1,600 of the nation's cardiac care facilities have been nominated by local Blue companies for potential designation as Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care. Approximately 64 percent of the facilities that submitted an application met the selection criteria and were designated as Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care.

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 Cardiac Care, along with Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery[®], 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 Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care, 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 cardiac programs. The Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care do not disrupt or replace these existing programs. Blue members (who have coverage for cardiac care) may not necessarily be required to use facilities 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