Blue Distinction Specialty Care Program is a national designation program, awarded by local Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies, recognizing healthcare providers that demonstrate expertise in delivering quality and affordable health care to meet consumers’ specialty care needs—safely, effectively, and cost-efficiently.

Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants consists of a national network of transplant centers that provide comprehensive transplant services through a coordinated, streamlined referral management program. The Transplant program will continue to focus on helping consumers find both higher quality and more affordable healthcare for their specialty care needs through the Blue Distinction national designation.

Program Design

The 2019 Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants is expanding to include adult and pediatric kidney transplants. The Solid Organ program will consist of ten transplant program designations. Providers may apply for any of the following Solid Organ Transplants programs:

- Adult Heart
- Adult Lung
- Adult Deceased Donor Liver
- Adult Living Donor Liver
- Adult Pancreas
- Pediatric Heart
- Pediatric Liver
- Adult Deceased Donor Kidney - *NEW
- Adult Living Donor Kidney - *NEW
- Pediatric Kidney - *NEW

The Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants – Solid Organ programs will continue to use information provided by a provider in the Provider Survey and publicly available data from the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR).

The following information explains how quality, business and cost evaluation components will be used to evaluate an applicant provider. Final selection criteria for quality, business, and cost, including specific scoring thresholds required for eligibility for Transplants will be published separately and posted publicly at [www.bcbs.com](http://www.bcbs.com).
Quality

Blue Distinction Specialty Care programs establish a nationally consistent approach to evaluating quality and safety, by incorporating quality measures with meaningful impact, with criteria that evolve over time with medical and quality measurement advances in that specialty area. Providers may be evaluated for Quality in the following domains for the Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants – Solid Organ programs:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
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| General Facility                       | Provider Survey               | • National Accreditation  
• Comprehensive Inpatient Facility  
• Transplant Program Guidelines, Accreditation, and Certification, where applicable:  
  - United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) Guidelines and Bylaws  
  - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Certification  
• Cardiac Rehabilitation for Heart Transplant Programs  
• Cardiology Consults for Pancreas Transplant Programs |
| Solid Organ Transplant Volume         | Provider Survey               | Program Specific Transplant Volumes:  
• Most Recent 12 Months  
• Most Recent 3 Years |
| Solid Organ Transplant Outcomes       | Registry                      | **ALL** Metrics Reported in the Scientific Registry for Transplant Recipients (SRTR) **January 2020** Public Release, including, but not limited to:  
• Patient and Graft Survival  
• 5-Tier Assessment  
• Waiting List Activity  
• Transplant Rate |
| Local Blue Plan Quality Criteria (If Applicable) | Plan Survey                  | Provider meets all Local Blue Plan Quality Criteria, if applicable.  
Local Blue Plan Criteria may consist of additional quality criteria beyond the national criteria, at the discretion of the local Blue Plan. |
Business

The following components are evaluated to determine if the Provider and its program meet the business selection criteria:

- Participation by Provider in the local Blue Plan’s BlueCard Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) Network.
- Participation by physicians and surgeons who perform transplant procedures in the local Blue Plan’s BlueCard PPO network.
- Provider and its corporate family meet BCBSA criteria for avoiding conflicts with BCBSA logos and trademarks.
- Local Blue Plan Business Criteria*, if applicable.

*Local Blue Plan Criteria may consist of additional business criteria beyond the national criteria, at the discretion of the local Blue Plan.

Cost of Care

The process to incorporate cost of care measures into the selection criteria is designed to provide a nationally consistent, equitable, and objective evaluation. If a provider meets quality and business selection criteria, then the following components will be evaluated to determine if a provider meets the cost of care criteria. Additionally, a local Blue Plan may establish additional cost criteria beyond the national criteria, at the discretion of the local Blue Plan.

Cost Data Source

Evaluation metrics and national thresholds are determined based on analysis of existing global contract agreements and Blue Plan claims data. In some service areas eligibility decisions are based upon the summed costs incurred during an episode of care using Blue Plan claims data only. Cost of care is not evaluated for transplant procedure types where there is insufficient availability of data nationally.

Risk and Geographic Adjustments

Cost metrics may be adjusted for patient-level risk factors, including co-morbidities. Additionally, a geographic adjustment factor may be applied to each episode to account for geographic cost variations in delivering care.

Deriving a Cost Measure and Setting the Cost Thresholds

National Blue Plan claims data are aggregated into episodes and the distribution of costs is evaluated to determine thresholds. Statistical trimming or winsorizing of outlier cases may be applied. Global contracts are compared against the thresholds to determine criteria eligibility. Cost data in some service areas will be aggregated and conformed to a facility cost index. Facility level cost indexes are then evaluated in comparison to a National Cost Threshold for each procedure type which is established with consideration for both geographic accessibility and cost savings.

Use of Provider-level Cost Information

Information displayed on Blue Distinction’s public website at www.bcbs.com will confirm that the provider is designated for Transplants and that it met the program’s transparent national selection criteria. BCBSA may share a provider’s individual Provider Survey responses (Raw Data).
and results (Scores) with BCBSA’s member Plans and, pursuant to a confidentiality agreement, Member Plans’ current and prospective accounts, for purposes of evaluation, care management, quality improvement, and Member Plans’ design of customized products and networks. BCBSA may combine a provider’s Raw Data and Scores together with other providers’ data to create aggregate information for public dissemination, provided that such aggregate information will not identify the provider by name, and will not contain any Protected Health Information (PHI).