

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 six areas of specialty care: bariatric surgery, cardiac care, complex and rare cancers, knee and hip replacement, spine surgery and transplants — identifying approximately 1,900* Blue Distinction Center® designations 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 Complex and Rare Cancers®	Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement®	Blue Distinction Centers for Spine Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®
Types of Conditions/Procedures Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass ▪ Vertical Banded Gastroplasty ▪ Biliopancreatic Bypass ▪ Biliopancreatic Bypass w/ Duodenal Switch ▪ Adjustable Gastric Banding ▪ Gastric Sleeve Resection ▪ Revision of gastric restrictive procedures initially performed for morbid obesity. (The initial procedure may have been performed at another institution.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inpatient cardiac care ▪ Cardiac rehabilitation ▪ Cardiac catheterization, including percutaneous coronary interventions (PCI) ▪ Cardiac surgery, including coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inpatient surgical treatment for 13 complex and rare subtypes of cancer: ▪ Bladder ▪ Bone – primary ▪ Brain – primary ▪ Esophageal ▪ Gastric ▪ Head and Neck ▪ Liver – primary ▪ Ocular Melanoma ▪ Pancreatic ▪ Rectal ▪ Soft Tissue Sarcomas ▪ Thyroid – medullary or anaplastic ▪ Acute Leukemia (inpatient, non-surgical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total knee replacement ▪ Total hip replacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discectomy ▪ Fusion ▪ Decompression procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heart ▪ Lung (deceased and living donor) ▪ Combination heart/lung ▪ Liver (deceased and living donor) ▪ Simultaneous pancreas kidney (SPK) ▪ Pancreas (PAK/PTA) ▪ Bone marrow/stem cell (autologous & allogeneic)

	Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care®	Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers®	Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement®	Blue Distinction Centers for Spine Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®
<p>Collaborators** on Development of Selection Criteria</p> <p><i>Medical organizations provided information and/or input</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians American College of Surgeons (ACS) American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) Surgical Review Corporation (SRC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians American College of Cardiology (ACC) Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) North American Spine Society (NASS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert physicians Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research (CIBMTR®) Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT)
<p>Sampling of Key Selection Criteria (refer to www.BCBS.com for complete lists)</p> <p><i>Criteria are categorized by structure, process and outcomes measures</i></p> <p><i>Key Selection Criteria is reflective of the most recent RFI completed.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established bariatric program, performing these procedures over the most recent 12 calendar months and performing a required volume (a minimum of 125) of the surgeries annually an acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care and emergency room services <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented patient care and follow-up care procedures <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acceptable re-admission, 30-day reoperation and mortality rates a greater than 50% sustained excess weight loss (EWL) at two years post-surgery for at least 90% of patients <p><i>These criteria were established with input from with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established cardiac care program, performing a required volume of the procedures annually, (e.g., a minimum of 125 open adult cardiac surgeries annually) adequate experience, training and certifications of their team, including sub-specialty board-certification for interventional cardiologists and cardiac surgeons <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented patient care and follow-up care procedures outcomes that meet certain thresholds acceptably low complication and mortality rates <p><i>These criteria were established with input from with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 documentation of multidisciplinary sub-specialty team member training – specialized cancer fellowships, certifications accreditation/certification by established cancer quality organizations <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluation of annual case volume and mortality rates <p><i>These criteria were established with input from with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established knee and hip replacement program, performing required annual volumes for certain procedures (e.g., at least 100 total knee and total hip replacement surgeries [primary plus revision] per year, with at least 25 each of total knee and total hip replacements) <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented patient care and follow-up procedures <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> facility performs at least 100 total knee and total hip replacement surgeries (primary plus revision) per year, with at least 25 each of total knee and total hip replacements <p><i>These criteria were established with input from with expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established spine surgery program, performing required annual volumes for certain procedures (e.g., at least 100 procedures annually for discectomy, fusion and/or decompression) <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented patient care and follow-up procedures <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> average and median surgeon volume (across all active spine surgeons) is at least 50 spine surgeries annually. Surgeons may include cases done at any facility. <p><i>These criteria were established with input from expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>	<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established transplant program, actively performing these procedures with consecutive operation for the preceding 24 months and performing a required volume of transplant procedures adequate experience, training and certifications of their transplant team <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented patient care and follow up care procedures, including referral back to primary care physicians <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluation of patient and graft aggregate outcomes <p><i>These criteria were established with input from expert physicians and medical organizations.</i></p>

	Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care®	Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers®	Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement®	Blue Distinction Centers for Spine Surgery®	Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants®
Approximate Number of Blue Distinction Center Designations*	350	500	90	540	310	100 (represents over 300 specific transplant programs)
Number of States with Blue Distinction Centers	45	44 (including the District of Columbia)	33 (including the District of Columbia)	42 (including the District of Columbia)	41 (including the District of Columbia)	33
States with at Least One Blue Distinction Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, NV, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, NH, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, NH, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, 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
Additional Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 2006 ▪ The redesignation and new application processes will expand to require that all designated facilities be accredited by either the American College of Surgeons' (ACS) Bariatric Surgery Center Network Program or the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery's (ASMBS) Bariatric Surgery Centers of Excellence Program ▪ The next bariatric designation is planned for 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 2006 ▪ The next cardiac designation is planned for 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 2008 ▪ The redesign of the complex and rare designation is planned for 2011/2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 2010 ▪ The redesign of the complex and rare designation is planned for 2012/2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 2010 ▪ The redesign of the complex and rare designation is planned for 2012/2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational since 1991 ▪ 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 ▪ The next transplant designation is planned for 2011/2012

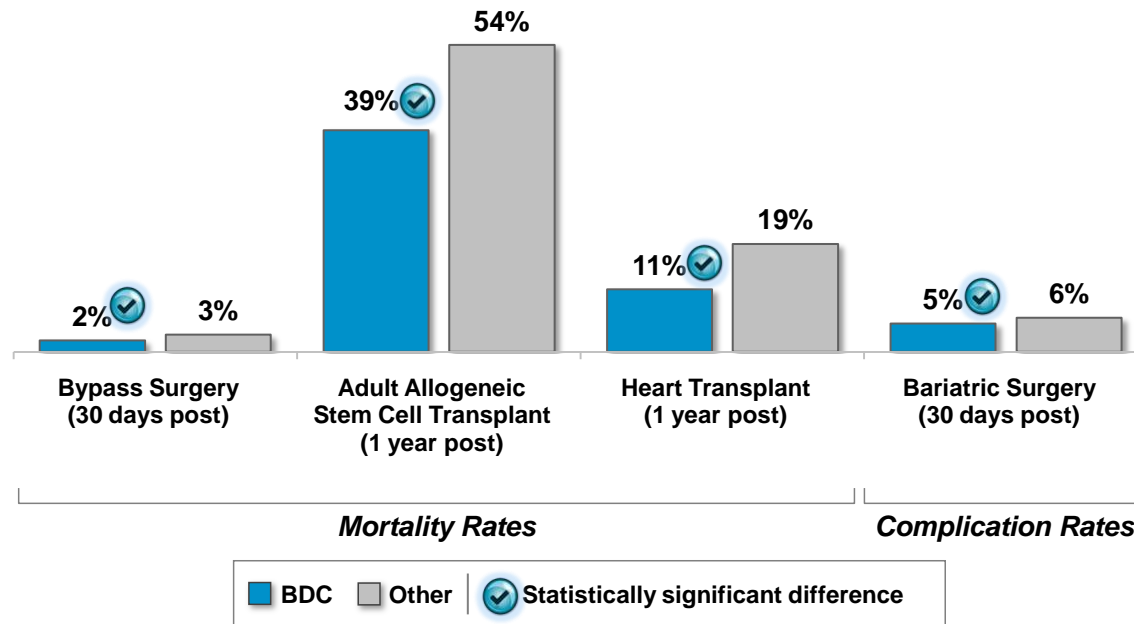
* Approximate number of designated facilities as of November 2010.

**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



Note: 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 2009 actuarial analysis of RFI 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, Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement, Blue Distinction Centers for Spine Surgery, 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. To find out more information, please visit www.bcbs.com.

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.