



Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care[®]

At Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, we know you are looking for affordable, high quality care, and it can be hard to find useful information about the facilities you might choose. That's why the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association created Blue Distinction[®], a designation awarded to medical facilities that meet national quality criteria established by expert physicians and medical organizations. Blue Distinction's goal is to help consumers find quality specialty care on a consistent basis, while improving affordability for employers.

To date, Blue Cross and Blue Shield has designated more than 800 Blue Distinction Centers across 45 states in the areas of:

- Bariatric Surgery—hospitals that provide weight loss surgery
- Cardiac Care—hospitals that treat certain heart problems with both surgery and catheter procedures
- Transplants—hospitals that perform organ transplants, and must be designated for each transplant type
- Complex and Rare Cancers—hospitals that provide comprehensive, multi-specialty, in-hospital surgical treatment for certain cancers that are rare and difficult to treat; facilities must meet volume requirements for at least five of the following cancers marked with an *

	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 SM
Types of Conditions/Procedures Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass • Vertical Banded Gastroplasty • Adjustable Gastric Banding • 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"> • Heart • Lung (deceased and living donor) • Combination heart and bilateral lung • Liver (deceased and living donor) • Simultaneous pancreas kidney (SPK) • Pancreas (PAK/PTA) • Kidney-only in conjunction with SPK • Bone marrow/stem cell (autologous and allogenic) 	<p>Inpatient surgical treatment for 13 complex and rare subtypes of cancer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bladder* • Bone • Brain—primary* • Esophageal* • Gastric* • Head and Neck • Liver* • Ocular Melanoma • Pancreatic* • Rectal* • Soft Tissue Sarcomas • Thyroid—medullary or anaplastic • Acute Leukemia* (inpatient, nonsurgical)

Note: Cancer care is complicated, and is usually provided by teams of doctors, nurses, and other professionals in your local community and at larger cancer centers. Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers provide very specialized treatments as part of an overall team approach for a very specific group of unusual cancers; many cancer patients can be cared for in their own local communities. Members should consult with their physicians and specialists before making a plan for getting cancer care.

Our Goal: Quality Care

With Blue Distinction, we were careful to construct an approach and process that reflects our goal of promoting quality care. That's why we worked in collaboration with expert physicians and medical organizations to establish nationally consistent and evidence-based quality criteria. It's also why our methodologies for selecting Blue Distinction Centers are transparent—readily available to consumers, employers, and providers.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts works proactively with facilities that do not initially achieve the Blue Distinction designation, providing report cards that indicate areas for quality improvement to help them qualify. To promote ongoing quality, facilities are also re-evaluated on a regular basis.

The Power of Information

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is a nationally recognized leader among health insurers committed to initiatives that provide high-quality, cost-effective health care driven by the power of information.

The criteria for designation as a Blue Distinction Center for Specialty Care are not based on claims data. Rather, we teamed with leading medical and surgical specialists and societies to take a holistic look at quality, including measures of services available, volume, processes, outcomes, and treatment expertise. The criteria for Blue Distinction designation were developed in partnership with expert organizations including:[†]

- Blue Distinction Centers for Bariatric Surgery
 - American College of Surgeons (ACS)
 - American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)
 - Surgical Review Corporation (SRCTM)
- Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care
 - American College of Cardiology (ACC)
 - Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS)
- Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants
 - Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research (CIBMTR[®])
 - Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT)
- Blue Distinction Centers for Complex and Rare Cancers
 - National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)

The Strength of Affordability

We are committed to delivering on our promise of high quality, more affordable health care by working to eliminate the overuse, underuse, and misuse of health care services. Blue Distinction is no exception. Based on clinical data from hospitals and registries, research indicates that Blue Distinction Centers demonstrate better, more consistent overall outcomes with fewer post-procedure complications and lower mortality rates. Furthermore, while research is ongoing, preliminary analysis of medical claims demonstrates that for surgery and catheter procedures used to treat certain heart problems, better outcomes are associated with lower overall cost to employers like you!^{††}

Remember, Blue Distinction Centers are facilities designated for the treatment of very specific conditions. For this reason, it is critical that members consult with their primary care physicians or specialists to identify facilities that are best suited to their individual health care needs. For more information about Blue Distinction or to see an interactive national map of the Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care, please visit www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction.

[†] These organizations have provided information and input, but do not formally endorse the Blue Distinction Centers program.

^{††} HealthCore analysis of WellPoint data; Analysis looked at costs associated with initial event only.

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 contact Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts.

