

Strengthening the Safety Net 2025 Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is new this year?** The 2025 Strengthening the Safety Net program has many of the same priorities as last year. Grantees are expected to support safety net patients by:
- Providing integrated medical, dental and behavioral health care and pharmaceutical assistance, to the extent possible.
 - Developing a referral network to help patients access services the applicant does not provide, including specialty care.
 - Offering patient navigation on site or through a reliable partner who can accurately report on encounters. Navigation should include helping patients understand their options for obtaining health coverage and applying for Medicaid, Healthy Michigan Plan or other health coverage when eligible.
 - Screening patients for health-related social needs and continuing to develop a network of partners to provide food, housing and transportation.
 - Participating in the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics or the Free Clinics of Michigan quality standards programs or submitting a board-approved quality assurance plan.
 - Referring patients to and accepting referrals from nearby emergency rooms, behavioral health providers and others.
 - Partnering with local public health departments and encouraging patients to access immunizations, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), lead and other health screenings and clinical services.

In addition, grantees must also commit to the following this year:

- Creating environments that are more accessible to people living with physical, cognitive, sensory and developmental disabilities.
 - Promoting the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline where those in need may receive crisis counseling, resources and referrals
2. **What are the additional grant requirements?** Applicants interested in applying as a medical home must raise an additional \$10,000 to match the Blue Cross award. These matching funds are expected to be new to the clinic and documented in a letter from the matching donor, due August 30, 2025.
3. **Are there any updates to the online application?** Applications will be submitted electronically again this year. There are no significant changes to the process. The link to the online application is available on the Strengthening the Safety Net website at bcbsm.com/safetynet. You will need to complete the online application and upload the required attachments.

Please fill out each required field on the online application and use the tabs at the top or arrows at the bottom to advance to the next page. The system will save your work automatically, even if you take a break. **However, it does require that you work on only one computer and use only one internet browser.** Please get started early. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to safetynet@bcbsm.com.

4. **For the purpose of this grant, how are medical and dental homes defined?** A medical home delivers team-based care led by a provider; it's intended to be comprehensive and continuous to maximize patient health. Clinics that provide this model of care and help patients gain coverage can be considered medical homes even if they help newly insured patients transition to a permanent health care home. Similarly, a dental home offers an ongoing relationship between a dentist and patient, inclusive of all aspects of oral health care delivered in a comprehensive, continuous, coordinated and family centered way.
5. **We are only open 15 hours per week, but we have a matching funder. Can we apply for the larger grant?** To be eligible for up to \$25,000, your clinic must be a health home and must be open 30 hours or more per week.
6. **We are a larger clinic, but we can't find a matching donor. Can we apply for an award without the match?** Any eligible clinic may request up to \$15,000 to support operations. No match is required.
7. **What is the time frame and process for securing a match?** Applicants are required to provide evidence of the match before August 31, 2025, by submitting a letter of commitment from the matching funder. These funds should be designated as a match for the Blue Cross award. If you need help raising the match, you may find it helpful to reach out to the local United Way or community foundation.
8. **What do you mean by enrollment assistance?** Enrollment assistance is helping patients understand what health care coverage they might be eligible for and how they can enroll in it. An eligible clinic must either provide enrollment assistance on site or work with a reliable partner who will assist patients with enrollment and inform the clinic about enrollment activities.

This includes helping patients:

- Learn about potential options for health care coverage
- Apply for health care coverage if they're eligible
- Find a doctor who accepts their insurance if they gain coverage
- Identify and apply for other public benefits as needed

9. **Do we need a fiduciary relationship with another organization to be eligible?** Awards are limited to nonprofit organizations designated by the IRS under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. If your clinic doesn't have its own 501(c)(3) designation, an organization that has this designation must serve as your fiduciary.
10. **If we don't currently have volunteers working at our clinic, are we eligible for the grant?**
No, you aren't eligible unless volunteers are currently working at your clinic.
11. **Are students considered volunteers?** Students aren't considered volunteers if they're receiving course credit or payment, or are required to complete an internship. If a volunteer happens to be a student and works at a clinic during his or her free time, this student can be counted as a volunteer.
12. **When does the requirement that a free clinic be operational for at least two years begin?**
If your safety net clinic began treating patients on or before October 1, 2023, you're eligible to apply.
13. **If we don't have an annual program report, will you accept other documents?** You can submit copies of your 2024 board minutes or a one- to two-page summary of your activities.
14. **If we don't have an annual financial report, will you accept other documents?** You can submit a copy of your 2024 IRS *Form 990*.
15. **Can nurse practitioners or other health care providers serve as medical director?** The medical director must be a physician, psychologist or dentist.
16. **Can grant funding be used to pay for services, such as specialty or oral health care?** Grant funding can be used to pay for services if the services are provided by contract with a discount rate. Typical examples include dental services, labs, X-ray, information technology support and grant writing.
17. **We currently have the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan logo displayed on our website. Is this permissible?** While we appreciate the acknowledgement, any use of the Blue Cross name or logo must be approved by Blue Cross to ensure compliance with our branding policies. Please contact us so we can review the use of our name and logo on your website.