



Strengthening the Safety Net 2023

Expanding access to care and
supporting health equity in Michigan

2023 Request for Applications

Application deadline: June 2, 2023

Applications are now being accepted bcbsm.com/safetynet

Strengthening the Safety Net 2023

Expanding access to care and supporting health equity in Michigan

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is committed to improving the health of everyone in the state. Over the past 18 years, we've invested more than \$18 million in Strengthening the Safety Net grants to increase access to affordable health care and improve health equity. Each year, these grants have helped nearly 50 clinics across Michigan provide free or low-cost care for uninsured and underinsured residents.

Now in our 19th year, Blue Cross is grateful for our safety net partners who continue to care for those who are marginalized. Their work promotes better health and contributes to reducing racial and ethnic, as well as economic and geographic, disparities in access to medical, dental and behavioral health care.

In 2023, Michigan free and charitable clinics are poised to care for current patients and those who will lose coverage at the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency or during the year-long Medicaid redetermination period. The 2023 Strengthening the Safety Net program is designed to help free and charitable clinics offer these patients free, high-quality health care and patient navigation. Strengthening the Safety Net grantees are expected to help patients enroll or re-enroll in health coverage and access community services that support good health, such as food, housing and transportation.

Partnering with Strengthening the Safety Net grantees is one way Blue Cross fulfills our social mission to expand access to health care services, enhance the quality of care and address major health issues to create a healthier Michigan. Access to high-quality medical, dental and behavioral health care and other services promotes healthier workers, stronger families, more engaged communities and overall cost savings for the health care system.

Blue Cross is pleased to announce the 2023 Strengthening the Safety Net program. Eligible safety net clinics from all over Michigan are encouraged to apply.



Overview

Research demonstrates that access to care is important for good health. According to Healthy People 2030, patients with a primary care source receive support with prevention, early detection, treatment and chronic disease management. They're more likely than patients without primary care to obtain flu shots, blood pressure tests and cancer screenings. However, many people in Michigan have limited access to care, and racial, ethnic and other disparities in access and coverage persist.

- According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, in 2021 7.3% of adults ages 19-64 lacked health insurance, including 5.5% of white, 7.4 % of Black, 11.4% of Hispanic and 16.7% of Native American adults. In addition, 6.8% of adults reported they did not seek health care due to cost, including 5.6% of white, 9.9% of Black, 15.1% of Hispanic and 13.6% of people of other races.
- The Michigan Oral Health Coalition's Michigan State Oral Health Plan 2025 cites disparities in access to oral health care. Black adults are 22% less likely than white adults to have had a routine dental visit in the past year. Black adults are 68% more likely than white adults to have unmet dental needs. Latino adults are 52% more likely than white adults to report having difficulty doing their job very often or fairly often due to poor oral health. People with disabilities also experience significant inequities in access to oral health care.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 20% of Michigan's population lives in rural areas with limited access to coverage and care. Rural health disparities are well-documented and rooted in social and workforce factors, geography and the rural economy.

At Blue Cross, we know having a regular source of care improves health outcomes, reduces health disparities and lowers health care costs. For many patients, safety net medical, dental and behavioral health clinics are their usual source of care. Safety net clinics help patients prevent, manage and treat illnesses. They also help patients navigate the health care system and services outside the clinic that support good health. They play a vital role in addressing unmet needs and disparities in access to care and social determinants of health.

Beginning in May of this year, safety net clinics will be faced with an even larger task when the year-long Medicaid redetermination process begins for more than 3 million Michiganders, including more than 700,000 who gained coverage during the public health emergency. Free and charitable clinics expect to provide health care for and treat patients who lose coverage, as well as offer assistance navigating the enrollment and re-enrollment process and addressing social determinants of health needs such as food, housing and transportation.

Blue Cross is proud to partner with Michigan safety net clinics to provide medical, dental, behavioral health, vision and specialty care, as well as pharmaceutical assistance, to those who are marginalized in our state.

Eligible safety net medical, dental, behavioral health, vision, pharmacy and specialty care providers are encouraged to apply.

Grant and reporting requirements

Grant deadlines	
April 17, 2023	Request for applications released
June 2, 2023	Due date for applications
July 31, 2023	Awards made
Aug. 31, 2023	Matching grant commitments letter due
By Sep. 29, 2023	Grant funds disbursed

Report deadlines	
April 30, 2024	Mid-year status report due
Dec. 2, 2024	Year-end status report due

Request for applications

Strengthening the Safety Net grantees provide clinical services and patient navigation. Volunteer or paid navigators help patients obtain health coverage and other services outside the clinic, including public health services, behavioral health and dental care, food, housing and transportation. In addition, clinic leaders participate in training to increase awareness of unconscious bias, change behaviors and track progress.

Applicants may apply for a grant to support clinic operations **or** medical or dental home services.

- **Clinic operations**

Safety net clinics that provide episodic care, are open for limited hours and treat more than 100 uninsured or underinsured patients annually are eligible to apply for up to \$15,000 to support their operations, including clinical and patient navigation services.

- **Medical and dental homes**

Clinics that serve as medical or dental homes and are open for at least 30 hours per week or bill Medicaid are eligible to apply for up to \$25,000 to support team-based care, including clinical and patient navigation services.

Applicants applying as a medical or dental home must raise an additional \$10,000 to match the Blue Cross award. Matching funds are expected to be new to the clinic and documented in a letter from the matching donor, due Aug. 31, 2023.

Final award amounts will be based on the number of applications received, the scope of applications submitted and the amount of funding available.

The following expectations are the focus of 2023 grants:

- Grantees are expected to support safety net patients impacted by Medicaid redetermination by caring for those who lose coverage and by refocusing on coverage enrollment and re-enrollment.
- Grantees are expected to expand access to high-quality care by participating in the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics or the Free Clinics of Michigan quality standards programs, or by submitting a board-approved quality assurance plan.
- Grantees must develop a mechanism for screening and intervening on health-related social needs, including a network of partners to provide food, housing and transportation.

As in the past, grantees are expected to provide integrated care to the extent possible. They must refer patients to and accept referrals from nearby emergency rooms, behavioral health providers and others. All grantees are expected to develop or maintain robust partnerships with local public health departments. They should encourage patients to receive COVID-19 and other immunizations, as well as lead and other health screenings. They should also encourage patients to access Women, Infants and Children program services, sexual health services and clinical services.

Specifically:

- Grantees must continue to provide high-quality medical, dental and behavioral health care and pharmaceutical assistance by integrating services within the clinic or providing referrals to external partners.
- Patient navigation must be offered on-site or by a reliable partner who can accurately report on navigation encounters. Navigation should include helping patients understand their options for obtaining health coverage and helping them apply for the Healthy Michigan Plan or other health coverage when eligible.
- Patient navigators must link patients to services that support the social, environmental and tangible dimensions of their lives, such as food, housing and transportation.
- Medical directors must routinely report to the board of directors on clinical quality.
- Grantees are expected to maintain referral relationships with nearby emergency rooms and offer care to uninsured patients. This includes establishing a contact with the emergency room leader, sharing clinic hours and services and inviting referrals from the emergency room.
- Grantees are expected to continue to increase awareness of behavioral health conditions and substance use disorder and build an effective network of treatment partners.
- Grantees are expected to maintain referral relationships with food pantries, gardens, markets, food assistance programs and other available resources to address food insecurity.
- Unconscious bias training is required of grantee leaders and encouraged for staff and volunteers.



Eligibility

To meet the eligibility requirements, safety net clinics must:

- Be based in Michigan with a mission to serve low-income, uninsured and underinsured patients.
- Be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization or be a community-based nonprofit organization paired with a 501(c)(3) organization.
- Provide medical, dental, vision, behavioral health, pharmacy or specialty care services to more than 100 patients and all interested adults.
- Provide services at little or no cost to patients.
- Work with volunteer administrators and clinicians.
- Have a physician serving as medical director.
- Have operated for at least two years on Oct. 1, 2023.
- Be in good standing on all previous Blue Cross grants, if applicable.

Grantees from prior years who meet all eligibility requirements can apply in 2023.

Use of Blue Cross grant funds

Blue Cross anticipates distributing funds by Sep. 29, 2023. These funds may be used for clinic operations and direct patient care as described in the submitted application for the following types of expenses:

- Equipment and medical supplies
- Patient medication
- Patient education related to health and health care
- Information technology hardware or software
- Facilities, including rent, utilities and repairs
- Communications, such as printing, postage and office supplies
- Salaries, wages and benefits
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Discounted contractual services, such as lab, X-ray, specialty care, information technology support and grant writing



Grant and reporting expectations

Strengthening the Safety Net grants are awarded to increase access to affordable health care for the uninsured and underinsured in Michigan. Grant funding may be used to support ongoing operations, expanded hours and services, team-based approaches to care, patient navigation and enrollment or enabling services. Grantees are required to submit a mid-year and a year-end report on the services provided with grant funds, including:

- Data on patient demographics, volunteer engagement, clinical services, enrollment support and referrals provided
- Data on other resources the clinic provides or helps patients obtain, including pharmaceutical assistance and specialty care access
- Information about the clinic's quality assurance program
- A financial report comparing budgeted to actual expenses

The mid-year status report is due April 30, 2024. The year-end status report is due Dec. 2, 2024.

Application process

All instructions and related documents are available at bcbsm.com/safetynet.

Submit your completed application by June 2, 2023. Late or incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Your application isn't complete until we receive the online application form with the materials listed below. The link to the online application form is on the website, bcbsm.com/healthysafetynet. The form itself is hosted by Benevity, a software company providing web-based grants management services to Blue Cross.

- An IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter for the free clinic or fiduciary organization
- If applicable, a letter from the fiduciary organization certifying an agreement to serve as fiduciary and comply with all terms and conditions in this request and Blue Cross' conditions of the grant. The letter must be signed by an individual with full authority to bind the fiduciary organization. Scanned signatures are acceptable.
- A roster of the free clinic's board of directors, including names, organizational affiliations, phone numbers and email addresses
- The clinic's most recent annual report. If you don't produce an annual report, submit a one- to two-page summary of 2022 accomplishments or include copies of board meeting minutes from 2022.
- The clinic's revenue and expense report for the most recent one-year period available
- An Automated Clearing House electronic payment form. **Please check this carefully.**
- An IRS Form W-9 *Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification*

Applicants are responsible for verifying receipt of their applications. If the primary contact on your application doesn't receive a confirmation upon submission, email the Social Mission department at safetynet@bcbsm.com to follow up.

Accountability

By applying for Strengthening the Safety Net funding, your clinic agrees to:

- Use awarded funds to cover eligible expenses consistent with your completed application and approved by Blue Cross.
- Secure Blue Cross approval in writing before deviating from your approved budget.
- Spend all funds by Sep. 30, 2024.
- Contact Blue Cross in July 2024 if any unspent funds aren't yet committed so our staff can work with you to use remaining funds according to the grant program.
- Participate in conference calls with Blue Cross staff upon request.
- Submit a mid-year status report and a final status report, including a brief narrative of activities completed, core clinic and patient demographic data and a financial report comparing budgeted to actual expenses. Report requirements and occasional requests for additional information, if any, will be designed to minimize grantee effort while providing Blue Cross with the data necessary to assess program effectiveness and promote program efforts.
- Adhere to Blue Cross' guidelines for media releases and other communications about this grant. These guidelines focus on the use of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan logo, availability of assistance from Blue Cross in writing media releases and how and when to contact Blue Cross about grant announcements.
- Comply with the Blue Cross conditions of the grant, available at bcbsm.com/safetynet.

Additional Information

Visit bcbsm.com/safetynet for the link to the application and other materials related to this grant opportunity. Email any questions to safetynet@bcbsm.com and include your name, clinic name and phone number.



Helpful resources

Access to care

- Blue Cross' Help with Health Care brochures include information about medical, dental, behavioral health and vision services, prescription assistance programs and health coverage. To access them, go to bcbsm.com. Click on the *Help* tab, then *Plan Documents and Forms*, then *Getting Care*. Scroll to the bottom of the page and select *Help with Health Care Brochures*.
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services lists free or low-cost health care, including medical, dental and behavioral health care, as well as resources for pharmaceutical assistance and help with health coverage at michigan.gov/mdhhs/assistance-programs/healthcare/help.*
- Locations and descriptions of Michigan's certified behavioral health clinics are available at michigan.gov/mdhhs/keep-mi-healthy/mentalhealth/ccbhc.*

Chronic Diseases

- MDHHS provides a list of resources to address chronic diseases such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, lung disease, cancer, kidney disease, stroke, arthritis and human immunodeficiency virus at michigan.gov/mdhhs/keep-mi-healthy/chronicdiseases.*

End of the COVID-19 public health emergency - Medicaid redetermination

- Download information and tools to help individuals with Medicaid coverage understand the upcoming changes at michigan.gov/mdhhs/end-phe/stakeholder-toolkit.*

Food insecurity

- Download information and tools for screening for food insecurity in a health care setting at hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FA_Clinical-Training_2017.pdf.*

Quality

- The National Association of Free & Charitable Clinics quality standards are available at nafclinics.org/our-impact/quality-standards/.*

Health equity, implicit bias, stigma, anti-racism

- MDHHS provides a list of available trainings and resources at michigan.gov/mdhhs/keep-mi-healthy/maternal-and-infant-health/health-equity.*

Coalition, M.O.H. (n.d.). Improving Oral Health in Michigan. Michigan Oral Health Coalition. <https://mohc.org/state-oral-health-plan>

Health Facts. (2019, June 25). The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/statedata/>

"Access to Primary Care – Healthy People 2030. Health.gov." Health.gov, health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/docial-determinants-health/literature-summaries/access-primary-care. Accessed 31 Jan. 2023.

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network don't own or control this website.