

## **Strengthening the Safety Net** ***Frequently asked questions***

1. **What is new this year?** We're asking grantees to provide patient navigation as a regular function of care. Patient navigators should focus on providing:
  - Patient assistance with obtaining Healthy Michigan Plan or other coverage
  - Patient education and assistance with obtaining a coronavirus vaccine
  - Patients referrals to behavioral health care providers including Community Behavioral Health Homes.
  - Patient referrals to food assistance resources, including gardens, pantries, markets, meals and other food assistance

In addition, unconscious bias training is required of grantee leaders and encouraged for staff and volunteers. One resource for this is the free, online Unconscious Bias in Medicine program offered by Stanford University, School of Medicine. You will be asked to attest to taking the course on the final report.

2. **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](http://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](mailto:safetynet@bcbsm.com)**.

3. **What are the additional grant requirements?** As in the past, grantees are expected to provide clinical services, quality assurance and referrals to other services outside the clinic that improve health. To the extent possible, grantees should provide integrated care. All grantees are expected to help reduce unnecessary emergency room use. And applicants interested in applying as a medical home are required to raise an additional \$10,000 to match the Blue Cross award.

Detailed expectations:

- Grantees are expected to provide medical, dental or mental health services and help their patients get the services they need outside of the clinic. These services should be integrated, if possible. Patient encounters are reported on the midyear and year-end reports.
- Patient navigation services must be offered as a regular function of care. Patient navigation encounters are reported on the midyear and year-end reports.

- Enrollment assistance may be offered on site or by referral to a reliable partner who can provide the service and report back to the clinic on encounters.
  - All grantees must provide patient education to respond to coronavirus vaccine hesitancy.
  - In addition, grantees are expected to continue to increase awareness of mental illness and substance use disorder and build effective referral relationships for services, including medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder.
  - To address food insecurity, grantees are expected to maintain referral relationships with food pantries, gardens, pantries, markets, meals and other available resources.
  - Medical directors must routinely report to the board of directors on clinical quality.
  - Grantees must link patients to services that support the social, environmental and tangible dimensions of the patients' lives, such as housing, transportation, education and job placement.
  - Grantees are expected to maintain referral relationships with nearby emergency rooms to extend care to uninsured patients. This includes establishing a contact with the emergency room leader, sharing information about clinic hours and services, and inviting referrals from the emergency room.
  - All are expected to use appropriate opioid treatment and prescribing guidelines and Michigan Automated Prescription System, or MAPS, when appropriate.
  - Applicants applying for funding as a medical home should indicate their interest on the application and submit a letter of commitment from the matching donor by August 31, 2021. These matching funds are expected to be new to your clinic.
4. **For the purpose of this grant, how are medical and dental homes defined?** A medical home delivers team-based care led by a medical provider that is intended to be comprehensive and continuous to maximize patient health. Free 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 per week or more.
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, 2021, 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. **What if our medical director doesn't routinely report to the board of directors about clinical quality?** Even if your medical director hasn't reported to the board of directors on clinical quality in the past, you're eligible for the grant if you begin this practice.
10. **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.
11. **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.
12. **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.
13. **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, 2019, you're eligible to apply.
14. **If we don't have an annual program report, will you accept other documents?** You can submit copies of your 2020 board minutes or a one- to two-page summary of your activities.

15. **If we don't have an annual financial report, will you accept other documents?** You can submit a copy of your 2020 IRS *Form 990*.
16. **Can nurse practitioners or other health care providers serve as medical director?** The medical director must be a physician or dentist.
17. **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.
18. **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.