Strengthening the Safety Net 2020
Expanding access to care and supporting health equity in Michigan

2020 Request for applications
Application deadline: June 26, 2020

bcbsm.com/safetynet
Strengthening the Safety Net 2020

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has a unique social mission and a commitment to improving the health of everyone in the state. Over the past 15 years, we’ve invested more than $15 million in Strengthening the Safety Net grants to increase access to affordable health care and improve health equity. These grants have helped more than 50 clinics across Michigan provide free or low-cost medical, dental and mental health care for uninsured and underinsured residents. Supporting safety net clinics 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.

In many ways, Michigan is a healthy state. Compared to the nation, we have fewer uninsured residents and more doctors, dentists and mental health care providers per person. (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2019) Still, many people in Michigan struggle with social and economic conditions that lead to poor health and experience racial and ethnic health disparities, including limited access to care and poor health. For example, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that 9.8% of adults ages 18 through 64 remain uninsured, and Feeding America finds that one in seven people live with food insecurity. Coronavirus is a new concern due to its widespread impact on the state. Accessible and affordable care is critical for addressing unmet needs, disparities and communicable diseases.

For the 16th year in a row, Blue Cross is pleased to announce the Strengthening the Safety Net grant program. We’re reaching out safety net health care partners across the state to support their work to improve access to care and health equity.

We know that having a usual source of health care improves health outcomes, reduces health disparities and lowers health care costs. Therefore, the Strengthening the Safety Net program is designed to help provide access to care for those who are most vulnerable in Michigan.

In addition, the program is poised to address unique challenges and opportunities we face this year:

- Safety net health care providers may treat those mildly ill with coronavirus and other communicable diseases. Clinics are also well positioned to immunize patients and teach them how to prevent the spread of viruses.
- Access to mental health and substance abuse treatment in Michigan is limited. However, safety net clinics can address two very significant barriers, stigma and lack of information about where care is available.
- Finally, Michigan free and charitable clinics can play a pivotal role helping patients address food insecurity (which often contributes to poor health) by routinely screening and linking them to existing resources.

This year’s Strengthening the Safety Net program aims to support clinic operations and address these challenges.

Strengthening the Safety Net grants promote healthier workers, stronger families, engaged communities and overall cost savings for the health care system. Safety net medical, dental, mental health, vision, pharmacy and specialty care providers are encouraged to apply.

Applications are now being accepted.
Strengthening the Safety Net grantees are expected to provide direct care to patients and help them obtain coverage and access additional services outside of the clinic, including medical, dental and behavioral health care and social services.

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

1. Clinic operations
   Safety net clinics that provide episodic care and are open for limited hours and treat more than 100 uninsured and underinsured patients annually are eligible to apply for up to $15,000 to support their operations and additional integrated care.

2. 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. Awards at this level require a $10,000 match.

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

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1Definitions: A medical home delivers team-based care led by a medical provider and 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 and coordinated and family-centered way.

Visit bcbsm.com/safetynet for more information.
New this year, grantees are expected to:

1. Educate patients about the coronavirus and refer them to treatment as needed.
2. Help patients and providers address stigma related to mental illness and substance use disorder and refer patients to mental health and substance abuse treatment whenever possible.
3. Screen patients for food insecurity, as a regular function of care, and refer them to gardens, pantries, markets, meals and other available resources.

Applicants are required to submit plans for these initiatives as part of their application. These plans may include educating patients or providers, adding partners or directing patients to additional services, assigning staff or volunteers to provide additional services such as phone consultation, or weaving these services to the clinic workflow, as examples.

As in the past, grantees are expected to provide clinical services, health insurance enrollment services, quality assurance and referrals to services outside of the clinic that improve health.

Grantees should continue to integrate medical, dental and behavioral health care when possible by providing integrated care directly or through partnerships. All grantees are expected to help reduce unnecessary emergency room use and respond effectively to the opioid overdose epidemic. Finally, applicants interested in applying as a medical home are required to raise an additional $10,000 to match the Blue Cross award.

More specifically:

- Enrollment services may be offered on site or by referral to a reliable partner who can support patients and report to the clinic on enrollment encounters. Enrollment encounters are reported on the midyear and year-end reports.
- 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, nutrition and job placement.
- Grantees are expected to develop or maintain a referral relationship 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.
- They must provide patient education and provider training to increase awareness of the opioid epidemic and develop an effective referral relationship for substance use disorder services, including medication assisted treatment.
- 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, 2020. These matching funds are expected to be new to your clinic.
Helpful resources

Access to care
• Blue Cross’ Help with Health Care brochures include medical, dental, mental health and vision services, prescription assistance programs and health coverage and are available at https://www.bcbsm.com/index/health-insurance-help/documents-forms/topics/getting-care/help-with-healthcare-brochures.html.
• MDHHS lists free or low-cost health care, including medical, dental and mental health care, pharmaceutical assistance, and resources for help with health coverage at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_2943_52115--,00.html.

Addressing stigma
• The SAMHSA-funded Great Lakes Prevention Technology Transfer Center website features anti-stigma tools and resources. Go to https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/great-lakes-pptc/preventing-and-reducing-stigma.
• The Ethel & James Flinn Foundation’s Opening Minds Ending Stigma video series is available at https://www.flinnfoundation.org/ and on YouTube.
• MDHHS’ Opioid Resources site includes tools for ending stigma, the national helpline phone number, information for prescribers and pharmacists, and other opioid news. Go to https://www.michigan.gov/opioids/.

Coronavirus
• Information about the coronavirus is available through the Centers for Disease Control at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71550_5104_97675--,00.html.

Food insecurity

Eligibility
Safety net clinics must meet all the following eligibility requirements:
1. Based in Michigan with a mission to serve low-income, uninsured and underinsured patients
2. 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
3. Provide medical, dental, vision, mental health, pharmacy or specialty care services to more than 100 patients and all interested adults
4. Provide services at little or no cost to patients
5. Work with volunteer administrators and clinicians
6. Have a physician serving as medical director
7. Have operated for at least two years on October 1, 2020
8. Be in good standing on all previous Blue Cross grants, if applicable

Grantees from prior years who meet all eligibility requirements can apply in 2020.
Use of Blue Cross grant funds
Blue Cross anticipates distributing funds by September 30, 2020. These funds may be used for clinic operations and direct patient care as described in your 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 as well as expand hours and services, team-based approaches to care, patient navigation and enrollment, or enabling services. Grantees will be required to submit a midyear and a year-end report on the services provided with grant funds, including:

- A brief narrative of activities completed with grant funds, including accomplishments and challenges
- Data on patient demographics, volunteer engagement, clinical services, enrollment support and referrals provided
- A description of other resources that your clinic provides or helps patients obtain, including pharmaceutical assistance and specialty care access
- A financial report comparing budgeted to actual expenses

The midyear status report will be due by April 30, 2021; the year-end status report will be due by November 30, 2021.

Application process
Submit your completed application no later than June 26, 2020. Late or incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

An online application is new this year. However, the information required is similar to what has been required in the past. Please follow the link to the application at bcbsm.com/safetynet. Fill out each required field on the form and use the tabs at the top or arrows at the bottom to advance to the next page. The online application 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 to work on the application.

The due date for the completed application with attachments is June 26, 2020. Late or incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Your submission isn’t complete until you have completed the online application and uploaded the following materials.

- IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter for the free clinic or fiduciary organization
- Free clinics with fiduciaries must submit a letter certifying an agreement to serve as fiduciary and comply with all terms and
conditions in this request and Blue Cross’s conditions of grant. The letter must be signed by an individual with full authority to bind the fiduciary organization; scanned signatures are acceptable.

- 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 2019 accomplishments or include copies of board meetings minutes from 2019.
- The clinic’s revenue and expense statement for the most recent one-year period available
- Local media form
- Automated Clearing House electronic payment form. Please check this carefully.
- IRS Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification

Visit bcbsm.com/safetynet for more information.

Applicants are responsible for verifying receipt of their applications. Any questions can be sent to the Social Mission department at safetynet@bcbsm.com. Please be sure to include your name, the name of your clinic and your phone number.

**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 September 30, 2021
- Contact Blue Cross in July 2021 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 up to two conference calls with Blue Cross staff upon request
- Submit a midyear 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.
- 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 grant, available at bcbsm.com/safetynet

References:


Additional Information

Visit bcbsm.com/safetynet for an application, answers to frequently asked questions and other related materials.

Send an email with your questions to safetynet@bcbsm.com. Include your name, clinic and phone number.