

# Strengthening the Safety Net 2021

Expanding access to care and supporting health equity in Michigan

## 2021 Request for applications

Application deadline:  
June 4, 2021

**Applications are now  
being accepted**



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[bcbsm.com/safetynet](https://bcbsm.com/safetynet)

# Strengthening the Safety Net 2021

## 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 16 years, we've invested more than \$16 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 care for uninsured and underinsured residents.

Now in our 17th year, amid the global coronavirus pandemic, we recognize, with increased urgency, the need to address racial and ethnic, as well as economic disparities in access to medical, dental, and mental health care and good health.

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is pleased to announce the 2021 Strengthening the Safety Net program. Eligible safety net clinics from all over Michigan are encouraged to apply.**

The 2019 Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey and the 2020 Michigan Food Security Council Initial Report provide a snapshot of the needs we aim to address:

- 10.8% of adults in Michigan are uninsured, 13.1% of Blacks, 10.9% of those who are multiracial or other, 23.9% of Hispanics, and 16.2% of those with annual incomes less than \$35,000.
- 11.5% of adults in Michigan did not access health care in the past 12 months due to costs, 13.2% of Black, 16.4% of those who are multiracial or other, 16% of Hispanics and 19.2% of people with annual incomes less than \$35,000.
- 14.5% of adults in Michigan have no personal health care provider, 19% of Blacks, 19.8% of those who are multiracial or other, 30.1% of Hispanics and 20.1% of people with annual incomes less than \$35,000.
- 18.7% of adults in Michigan are in fair or poor health, 26.6% of Blacks, 17.4% of those who are multiracial or other, 19.8% of Hispanics and 32.3% of people with an annual income less than \$35,000.
- 16% of adults in Michigan are in fair or poor mental health, 16.3% of Blacks, 17.7% of those who are multiracial or other, 19.1% of Hispanics and 20.1% of people with an annual income less than \$35,000. (MDHHS, 2021).

Furthermore, according to the Michigan Food Security Council, there is an alarming and increasing number of community members with limited access to nutritious and affordable food. "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 1.3 million Michiganders faced food insecurity, and now, it is estimated that approximately 1.9 million individuals are food insecure in Michigan." Notably, "High food insecurity rates correlate with pronounced racial disparities, in areas such as the metro Detroit area as well as several counties in Northern Michigan in which Tribal reservations are located." (MDHHS, 2020)

Thus, the Strengthening the Safety Net program targets the uninsured, those who suffer from poor health and mental health but forgo care, and Michiganders without a doctor. The program is designed to expand access to health care and improve health equity. We know that having a usual source of health care improves health outcomes, reduces health disparities, and lowers health care costs. We are proud to partner with safety net clinics to provide high quality clinical care.

In addition, the program requires a strong commitment to patient navigation and training for clinic leaders in unconscious bias. Patient navigators help patients overcome barriers to help them gain access to insurance coverage and establish a health care home, obtain a

"Every medical professional is mission-driven to heal their patient — without regard for that patient's cultural background. But research indicates that bias does show in various ways in the delivery of health care, more often implicitly rather than explicitly. It benefits all medical professionals to spend time working to recognize where implicit bias may be present in the delivery of care and developing approaches to address it to the benefit of patients everywhere."

Daniel J. Loepp, president and CEO,  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

coronavirus vaccine, access behavioral health care and reach out for assistance beyond the walls of the clinic, including for food assistance. A deeper understanding of unconscious bias will enable clinic leaders to address organizational systems that unintentionally result in disparities. This training will be required of all medical professional in Michigan and, starting later this year, it will be required of the leaders of Strengthening the Safety Net grantee organizations.

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.

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.

## Grant deadlines

Grant deadlines	
April 15, 2021	Request for applications released
June 4, 2021	Application, budget form and attachments due. Acknowledgements will be sent when applications are received.
July 30, 2021	Awards made
August 31, 2021	Matching grant commitment letter due
By September 30, 2021	Grant funds disbursed
Report deadlines	
April 29, 2022	Midyear status report due
November 30, 2022	Year-end status report due

## Request for applications

Strengthening the Safety Net grantees are expected to provide clinical services and patient navigation. Volunteer or paid navigators help patients obtain health coverage, coronavirus vaccinations and services outside of the clinic, including behavioral health care, social services and food assistance. In addition, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is requiring clinic leaders to participate in online training in unconscious bias.

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, 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, including clinical and patient navigation services.

### 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, including clinical and patient navigation services. 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.

## New this year

All grantees are expected to offer patient navigation services, including the following:

- Patient assistance with obtaining Healthy Michigan Plan or other coverage
- Patient education and assistance with obtaining a coronavirus vaccine
- Patient 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.

## 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 and help reduce unnecessary emergency room use. 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.

## 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, 2021.
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 2021.

## Use of Blue Cross grant funds

Blue Cross anticipates distributing funds by September 30, 2021. 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, 2022. The year-end status report will be due by November 30, 2022.

## Application process

Submit your completed application no later than June 4, 2021. Late or incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

All instructions and related documents are available at [bcbsm.com/safetynet](https://bcbsm.com/safetynet). Your application isn't complete until we receive both your online application and the following materials:

- Include an IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter for the free clinic or fiduciary organization.
- Applicants 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 the grant. The letter must be signed by an individual with full authority to bind the fiduciary organization; scanned signatures are acceptable.
- Include a roster of the free clinic's board of directors, including names, organizational affiliations, phone numbers and email addresses.
- Include the clinic's most recent annual report. If you don't produce an annual report, submit a one- to two-page summary of 2020 accomplishments or include copies of board meeting minutes from 2020.
- Include the clinic's revenue and expense budget for the most recent one-year period available.
- Include Automated Clearing House electronic payment form. Please check this carefully.
- Include IRS Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification.

All materials must be submitted by the online application form, hosted by Benevity. Questions can be directed to [safetynet@bcbsm.com](mailto:safetynet@bcbsm.com).

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](mailto:safetynet@bcbsm.com) to follow up. 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, 2022.
- Contact Blue Cross in July 2022 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 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 grant, available at [bcbsm.com/safetynet](https://bcbsm.com/safetynet).

## 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](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_2943_52115---,00.html).\*
- Locations and descriptions of Michigan's 18 certified behavioral health homes are available on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics Technical Assistance Center ([thenationalcouncil.org](http://thenationalcouncil.org))\* website.

### Conoravirus

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan coronavirus updates are available at <https://www.bcbsm.com/coronavirus-updates>.\*
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services coronavirus information is available at <https://michigan.gov/coronavirus>.\*
- The Centers For Disease Control COVID-19 resources are at <https://www.cdc.gov//index.html>.\*

### Food insecurity

- Download information and tools for screening for food insecurity in a health care setting at <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/explore-our-work/community-health-care-partnerships/addressing-food-insecurity-in-health-care-settings/>.\*

### Unconscious bias

- Unconscious Bias in Medicine, Stanford University, School of Medicine <https://online.stanford.edu/courses/som-ycme0027-unconscious-bias-medicine-cme>.\*

## Additional Information

Visit [bcbsm.com/safetynet](https://bcbsm.com/safetynet) for the link to the application and other materials related to this grant opportunity.

Send an email with your questions to [safetynet@bcbsm.com](mailto:safetynet@bcbsm.com). Include your name, clinic name and phone number.

\*Michigan.gov\*. 2021. Prevalence Estimates for Risk Factors and Health Indicators by Race-Ethnicity, [online] Available at: <[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/2019-MiBRFS-Race-Tables\\_711914\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/2019-MiBRFS-Race-Tables_711914_7.pdf)>\* [Accessed 20 January 2021].

\*Michigan.gov\*. 2020. Initial Report: COVID-19 Findings and Recommendations. [online] Available at: <[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/FSC\\_Initial\\_Report\\_v6\\_712638\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/FSC_Initial_Report_v6_712638_7.pdf)>\* [Accessed 25 February 2021].

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