

## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### What is Blue Distinction?

Blue Distinction is a program sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies to create a unique level of healthcare transparency with two goals: engaging consumers to enable more informed healthcare decisions and collaborating with physicians and other providers to improve healthcare results and affordability. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas is part of this program and launched BlueCompare, an enhancement to the online Provider Finder<sup>®</sup> to help our subscribers participate actively in the management of their healthcare.

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### What is BlueCompare?

BlueCompare is a component of the online Provider Finder tool. BlueCompare includes Evidence Based Measures information about participating physicians in the BlueChoice and BlueChoice Solutions networks (including Physicians who service HealthSelect, UT Select and other group accounts).

Note: The BlueCompare tool is provided for informational purposes only. BlueCompare information is available to assist subscribers and non-subscribers in the selection of a health care provider. It is not intended to be a recommendation to consumers. Selection of a health care physician is a personal choice, and consumers should not base decisions solely on Evidence Based Measures information displayed in BlueCompare. BlueCompare is based on claims from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) PPO and POS and membership records and may not be indicative of the physician's overall practice.

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### What Modifications Were Made to BlueCompare for 2008?

The modifications to the BlueCompare update in 2008 include:

- BCBSTX has been a leader in providing information to consumers on physician performance on evidence based measures guidelines and relative cost of care. As the market has matured, several organizations such as the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the National Quality Forum (NQF) are beginning to develop national standards for reporting of physician performance and we support both these efforts. Thus, we elected to discontinue the affordability scale (our physician and professional provider relative cost of care indicator) until the national standards are more clear.
  - New Evidence Based Measures (EBM) symbols "Specialty Not Measured", "Not Enough Data", and "Voluntarily Declined" will be displayed for the appropriate physician(s).
  - A BlueCompare column in Provider Finder
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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### **What Are Evidence Based Measures (EBM)?**

Evidence Based Measures use claims and enrollment data to assess adherence to recognized clinical guidelines. Health Benchmarks, Inc (HBI) maintains expert Scientific Advisory boards to advise on the specifics of indicator construction and development. These indicators were developed in collaboration with HBI and cover significant areas of care in diabetes, coronary artery disease, preventive health services, and others. Performance on the indicators is attributed to physicians based upon their involvement in treating the qualifying patients.

Information about the EBM guidelines, such as the clinical intent and sponsoring organization, can be found on the BCBSTX Provider Web site at [http://www.bcbstx.com/provider/ebm\\_index.htm](http://www.bcbstx.com/provider/ebm_index.htm).

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### **How Are Evidence Based Measures Being Used By BCBSTX to Assess Performance?**

BCBSTX uses a model to recognize physicians for performance on Evidence Based Measures that cover significant processes of care in diabetes, preventive screenings, cardiovascular disease, and others. Physicians are recognized for performance relative to specialty peers in Texas. To view the Evidence Based Measures list used for 2008, refer to the information on page M-5.

All physicians within a common Practice Evaluation ID and specialty (i.e. physician group) are assessed together and are given the same EBM information. For example, a group of physicians practicing under a common Tax identification number that is comprised of Internal Medicine, Family Practice, and Obstetrics-Gynecology specialties would receive three distinct evaluations. Physicians within each specialty within the group will be assessed together regardless of the level of individual physician contribution.

A physician group is evaluated with only those indicators that are considered relevant to the specialty. A minimum of 30 denominator events must be attributed to the physician group to qualify for an assessment. A group's performance is assessed relative to other physicians in the same specialty within the BCBSTX BlueChoice/BlueChoice Solutions network. Performance is aggregated across measures. Each measure is weighted by the inverse of the variance of the measures. This results in a weighted average that reflects both the total number of denominator events and the variability of performance by peers. This method decreases the impact of differences in number of denominators that occur from practice to practice. The method summarizes performance on individual measures into a single EBM score.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

**How Are Evidence Based Measures Being Used By BCBSTX to Assess Performance?**  
continued

The distribution of these scores across the specialty is categorized into multiple levels of performance. The highest are assigned dark blue or light blue symbols. Where there are measures for a specialty and sufficient data is available, physicians at or above the threshold will be recognized with either a dark or light blue symbol. When the physician practices in a group, the EBM information reflects the performance of all the physicians in the same specialty within that group. The following EBM information will be shown for physicians where applicable: Specialty Not Measured, Not Enough Data or Voluntarily Declined.

**List of Evidence Based Measures - 2008**

The measures listed below are used for the 2008 BlueCompare EBM assessment update:

#	Category	Description	Measured Working Specialties
1	Preventive Screening	Mammography Screening for Women	Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics-Gynecology
2	Preventive Screening	Cervical Cancer Screening	Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics-Gynecology
3	Preventive Screening	Colorectal Cancer Screening	Family Practice, Gastroenterology, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics-Gynecology
4	Childhood Immunizations	Childhood Immunizations: Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV)	Family Practice, Pediatrics
5	Childhood Immunizations	Childhood Immunizations: Measles, Mumps & Rubella (MMR)	Family Practice, Pediatrics
6	Diabetes	Diabetic Retinal Exam	Endocrinology, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine
7	Diabetes	Glycosylated Hemoglobin (HbA1c) Test for Diabetes	Endocrinology, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine
8	Diabetes	LDL Monitoring for Diabetes	Cardiovascular Disease – Non-interventional, Endocrinology, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Nephrology
9	Diabetes	Monitoring for Diabetic Nephropathy	Endocrinology, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

#	Category	Description	Measured Working Specialties
10	Cardiovascular Disease	Treatment of Cardiovascular Conditions: Monitoring Lipid Levels	Cardiovascular Disease – Non-interventional, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine
11	Preventive Care	Annual Visual Field Tests for Glaucoma	Ophthalmology
12	Antibiotic Use	Appropriate Management of Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)	Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Urgent Care
13	Medication Monitoring	Use of Long-Term Control Drugs for Persistent Asthma	Allergy-Immunology, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatric Pulmonology, Pediatrics
14	Complication Avoidance	Risk-Adjusted Complication Likelihood for Surgeries	General Surgery
15	Imaging	Appropriate Use of Imaging in Low Back Pain Assessment (lowback28)	Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Neurological Surgery, Neurology, Orthopedic-Spine, Orthopedic Surgery, Physical Medicine & Rehab, Rheumatology, Urgent Care
16	Imaging	X-ray Prior to MRI/CAT Scan in the Evaluation of Lower Back Pain (lowback)	Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Neurological Surgery, Neurology, Orthopedic-Spine, Orthopedic Surgery, Physical Medicine & Rehab, Rheumatology, Urgent Care
17	Cancer	Radiation Therapy Following Breast Conserving Surgery	General Surgery, Oncology
18	Cancer	Follow-up After Initial Diagnosis and Treatment of Colorectal Cancer	Colon & Rectal Surgery, Family Practice, Gastroenterology, General Surgery, Geriatric Medicine, Internal Medicine, Oncology

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

**Specialties  
Evaluated for  
2008  
Assessment**

The following specialties are currently evaluated for EBM performance:





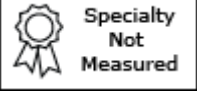
Allergy–Immunology	Neurology
Cardiovascular Disease – Non-interventional	Obstetrics-Gynecology
Colon & Rectal Surgery	Oncology
Emergency Medicine	Ophthalmology
Endocrinology	Orthopedic – Spine
Family Practice	Orthopedic Surgery
Gastroenterology	Pediatric Pulmonology
General Surgery	Pediatrics
Geriatric Medicine	Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Internal Medicine	Rheumatology
Nephrology	Urgent Care
Neurological Surgery	

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

### What Does the BlueCompare EBM Symbol Information Mean?

The following are the BlueCompare EBM symbols and definitions for the 2008 update:

	Exceeds expected performance compared to other doctors.
	Meets expected performance compared to other doctors.
	This doctor requested that the BlueCompare EBM symbol not be shown.
	There is not enough data to measure performance or this doctor or provider is new to the network. Re-evaluations are conducted periodically.
	Performance measures are not available for this specialty.

### To Whom is an Evidence Based Measures Report Available?

An EBM report is available for the following:

- Physicians that are in a measured specialty and have sufficient data for reporting; or
- A physician (Practice Evaluation ID and specialty) who is being recognized for EBM performance and has either a dark blue or light blue symbol; or
- A physician who has sufficient data for scoring, but is not being recognized at this time for BlueCompare EBM performance.

An EBM report is not available for the following:

- Physician (Practice Evaluation ID and specialty) in a measured specialty but with insufficient data; or
- Physicians that practice in a specialty that is not measured for EBM performance; or
- Professional providers will not have a report available because EBM measures only physicians' (MDs and DOs) performance.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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**Why Did I Receive Several Different Reports and Different EBM Information?**

The EBM information is assigned at the Practice Evaluation ID level. A physician who practices under multiple Tax identification numbers can therefore be assigned different EBM information for each group and specialty in which the physician is active.

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**How Can I Order Reports or Get a Copy of the Report(s) from the BlueCompare Mailer?**

To order reports or to get a copy of the report(s), please contact your local Professional Provider Network office.

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**What Was the Date Range Used for the 2008 BlueCompare Assessment Update?**

Members are placed in the denominator based on services received in calendar years 2005 and 2006. For some measures, claims submitted over a five (5) year period are used to define denominator exclusions and numerator events.

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**Did the BlueCompare Assessment Involve Medical Record Reviews?**

The assessment included claims data available from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) PPO and POS and membership records.

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**What BlueCompare Information Will I See If I Am Displayed Under More Than One Specialty in Provider Finder?**

The Provider Finder search tool can display a physician multiple times. It depends on several factors such as the Practice Evaluation ID, Provider number and specialty/specialties. For the BlueCompare assessment, a unique provider number is assigned to a single specialty. If that unique provider number appears under multiple specialties in Provider Finder, the BlueCompare information may appear for all specialties under which the physician is listed.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### When Can or Will EBM Information Change?

Currently, assessments for EBM are typically performed annually.

New physicians who are added to an existing group will receive the same EBM information that is assigned to others in the group within the Practice Evaluation ID and the same specialty. A physician who contracts under a new UPIN or Tax ID within the BlueChoice/BlueChoice Solutions network will display the symbol "Not Enough Data" in Provider Finder until the next annual assessment.

EBM information can change as a result of a review that is conducted upon your written request. You can request a review of your EBM results at any time. Refer to the information on page M-12 regarding Inquiries and Reviews.

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### Can a Physician Opt Out and Not Display the BlueCompare Information in Provider Finder?

A physician can opt out and choose to not display the EBM information in Provider Finder for calendar year 2008. If a physician practices in a group and the other physicians in the group also wish to opt out, each physician must fill out and sign the Opt Out form and return the form via fax or mail it to the address indicated on the form. The Opt Out form is located on page M-11.

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### How Long Does It Take to Change BlueCompare Information In Provider Finder?

All review requests will be processed and changes will be submitted as quickly as possible; updates are typically made on a daily basis.

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### How Does My BlueCompare Information Affect My Participation Status in the Networks?

- **BlueChoice:** Your participation in the BlueChoice large PPO/POS network is not affected by your BlueCompare information. Therefore, no action is required on your part to continue your participation.
  - **BlueChoice Solutions:** The information used for BlueCompare may have an impact on your participation in the smaller BlueChoice Solutions PPO/POS network. If you have any questions regarding participation criteria, please review the information on the BCBSTX Provider Web site at [http://www.bcbstx.com/provider/bluechoice\\_solutions/index.htm](http://www.bcbstx.com/provider/bluechoice_solutions/index.htm).
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### Who Can I Call If I Have Questions?

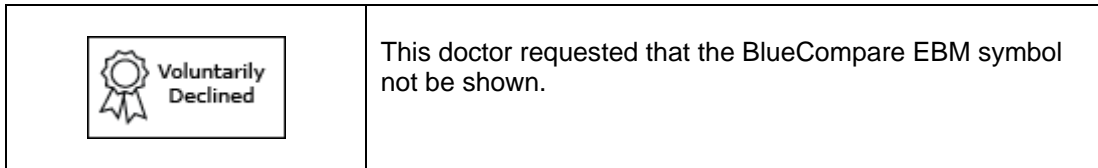
Please contact your local Professional Provider Network office.

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## BlueCompare for Physicians How to “Opt Out” From Displaying Your Evidence Based Measures (EBM) Information

If you are a physician to whom EBM results apply, you have the option to **not display** your EBM information in Provider Finder®. Instead, Provider Finder will display the following graphic:



Please note:

- The Opt Out will be effective until the next BlueCompare update.
- The Opt Out applies to the provider number you indicate on the form below.

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### **Only complete this form if you are opting out of displaying your EBM Information**

Please supply the following information if you prefer that your EBM information **NOT** be displayed in Provider Finder. **Each physician in your practice** who wishes to opt out of displaying the EBM information must complete and return this form.

Provider Name

Provider Address

City

State

Zip

Provider Number  
(required)

Physician Signature

Date

**Fax to BCBSTX:** (972) 766-5559

Attn: Network Performance Mgmt

**Or mail to:**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas

Attn: Network Performance Mgmt., North Bldg., Mail Drop D

P.O. Box 655730

Dallas, TX 75265-5730

Note: The “Voluntarily Declined” graphic will be displayed approximately 5 business days after the signed form is received.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### How to Request Reviews and Make Inquiries

BCBSTX makes every effort to ensure our network physicians understand the information listed in our BlueCompare Web tool. If you are not satisfied with your BlueCompare Evidence Based Measures (EBM) information, you have the right to request a formal review.

#### There are two levels of review:

- The initial review is an internal review conducted by BCBSTX. Review decisions are typically reported within 30 days from our receipt of the request.
- Second-level reviews are conducted by the BCBSTX Texas Medical Advisory Committee or the BCBSTX Texas Peer Review Committee. Members of both committees are practicing physicians and other health care providers who also participate in networks serving members of BCBSTX health programs.

*Second-level* reviews to re-evaluate the initial review decision ordinarily must be requested by the provider. Decisions are made within 30 days from the receipt of the second-level review request. In some instances, the timeframe will be extended due to the timing of the Second-Level Review Committees' meeting dates.

#### How to Request a Review

You may request a review of your updated BlueCompare EBM information by sending a written request to your local Professional Provider Network (PPN) office.

Requests should include:

- the date of the request
- your name and address
- your provider number
- your Practice Evaluation ID Number (found on the BlueCompare letter and reports)
- a statement of the reason(s) for requesting a review

#### What is the Deadline for Requesting a Review?

You may request a review at any time. Results of requests will be reflected in BlueCompare as quickly as possible; updates are typically made on a daily basis

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### How to Request Reviews and Make Inquiries, continued

#### How to Opt Out of Displaying Your Symbol Until Your Review is Complete

You may opt out of displaying your EBM symbol information until the review process is complete. If you wish to do so, please submit the form titled "BlueCompare for Physicians – How to Opt Out From Displaying Your Evidence Based Measures (EBM) Information" along with your request for review. The opt out form is located on page M-11.

#### Where to Direct Other BlueCompare Inquiries

All other inquiries regarding BlueCompare methodology, interpretation of scores, your provider number, tax ID number or specialty designation should be directed to your local Professional Provider Network office. You should receive a response within 30 days of our receipt of the inquiry.

[View information on BlueCompare](#) and sample reports for the [BlueCompare Evidence Based Measures \(EBM\)](#).

Please Note: General inquiries and requests for reports are not considered by BCBSTX as formal requests for review. Requests for review must follow the procedure outlined above. You do not have to order reports prior to requesting a review.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. *How can I order reports or get a copy of the report(s) from the BlueCompare mailer?***

To order reports or to get a copy of the report(s), please contact your local Professional Provider Network office.

**2. *If I ordered reports, will I also get a review?***

General inquiries and requests for reports are not considered by BCBSTX as formal requests for review. You do not have to order any reports prior to requesting a review. To ensure your status is reviewed, you must send a written request to your local Professional Provider Network office.

**3. *Do I need to send a written request for review or can I call my local PPN representative to request a review?***

We request that reviews be in writing because a written request enables us to track and forward the case to the correct staff members for a response. They can be mailed, faxed or sent via email to the local PPN office. The request should include:

- the date of the request
- your name and address
- your Provider Number
- your Practice Evaluation ID Number (found on the BlueCompare letter and reports)
- a statement of the reason(s) for requesting a review

**4. *What kind of information should I submit for a review of my EBM information?***

You are not required to submit any additional information when requesting a review, but it can be helpful. The following are examples of information that will be considered during the EBM symbol information review process.

1. Medical records for patients that were assessed as part of the Evidence Based Measures designation process.
  - a. Documentation that target processes were completed or ordered.
  - b. Documentation that the patient does not fit in the denominator for the measure.
  - c. Quality improvement reports from an electronic medical record system demonstrating your level of performance.
  - d. Completed tools, such as data collection flow sheets, located within relevant conditions and measures listed on the **AMA Physician Consortium on Performance Improvement Measurement** Web site at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/4837.html>.

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## Blue Distinction and BlueCompare, continued

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### Frequently Asked Questions, continued

2. Demonstrate that your practice has a system for delivering preventive and other evidence based services such as:
  - a. **Putting Prevention Into Practice** or
  - b. **Provide results generated from METRIC and PIM and action plans for improving.** For more information please visit [www.aafp.org/online/en/home/cme/selfstudy/metric.html](http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/cme/selfstudy/metric.html) and [www.abim.org/pim/](http://www.abim.org/pim/).

### **5. How long does it take to get a decision on the review?**

Our goal is to provide a written response with the results of the review within 30 days from our receipt of your request. In some instances, the timeframe will be extended due to the timing of the Second-Level Review Committees' meeting dates.

### **6. How long does it take to change BlueCompare information on Provider Finder®?**

All reviews submitted will be processed as noted above and changes will be submitted as quickly as possible; updates are typically made on a daily basis.

### **7. How does my BlueCompare information affect my participation status in the networks?**

- **BlueChoice:** Your participation in the BlueChoice large PPO/POS network is not affected by your BlueCompare information. Therefore, no action is required on your part to continue your participation.
- **BlueChoice Solutions:** The information used for BlueCompare may impact participation in the smaller BlueChoice Solutions PPO/POS network. If you have any questions regarding participation criteria, please review the information on the BlueChoice Solutions Web page at [www.bcbstx.com/provider/bluechoice\\_solutions/index.htm](http://www.bcbstx.com/provider/bluechoice_solutions/index.htm).

If you have questions regarding your participation, please contact your local Professional Provider Network office.

### **8. What is the difference between the Dark Blue and the Light Blue symbol?**

Currently the dark blue symbol represents the top 40% within a given specialty. The light blue symbol represents those below the top 40% and not significantly below the performance of their peers.

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