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## **BCBSA Launches Blue Distinction Program to Foster Consumer Engagement, Provider Collaboration Through Healthcare Transparency**

**July 26, 2006. Columbia, Md.**—The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) recently launched Blue Distinction<sup>sm</sup>, a nationwide program that will create an unprecedented level of healthcare transparency with two goals: engaging consumers to enable more informed healthcare decisions and collaborating with providers to improve quality outcomes and affordability.

In collaboration with leading hospitals, physicians and medical specialty societies, Blue Distinction is transforming raw hospital and physician data into accessible, understandable and personalized information. Available to the Blues' more than 96 million members nationwide, Blue Distinction provides comprehensive healthcare quality and affordability information that is based on objective, consistent and common standards.

“Blue Distinction brings transparency to healthcare—similar to what consumers expect when purchasing most goods and services today. It is the cornerstone of our ongoing effort to create a more consumer-focused, knowledge-driven national healthcare system,” said Scott P. Serota, BCBSA president and CEO.

“Blue Distinction also will bring together doctors and patients—encouraging stronger relationships than ever before—and that leads to healthier lives and lower costs.”

Driven by quality, collaboration and affordability, Blue Distinction will strengthen consumer engagement and provider partnerships through transparency demonstrations that identify and compare medical costs; a nationwide hospital measurement and improvement program; and through new specialty centers offering the best practices and standards of care in bariatric surgery, cardiac care and transplant services.

### **Blue Distinction Transparency Demonstrations**

Seventeen Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans are collaborating with local hospitals, physicians and medical groups in transparency demonstrations to identify and test the most effective ways to help consumers learn about the absolute and relative costs of medical services, including physician and hospital services. Blue Distinction demonstrations are underway in urban, suburban and rural markets coast-to-coast.

### **Blue Distinction Hospital Measurement and Improvement Program<sup>sm</sup>**

The Blue Distinction Hospital Measurement and Improvement Program integrates metrics focusing on the appropriateness of care for common conditions such as heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia. Collaborating with medical societies and provider associations, Blue Distinction measures are drawn from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Available to employers, the program covers nearly 90 percent of the Blue members in communities across the country.

### **Blue Distinction Centers<sup>sm</sup>**

Blue Distinction Centers for bariatric surgery and cardiac care are in major markets nationwide, building on the Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants first established in 1991. Blue members have received nearly 8,000 organ and bone marrow transplants through approximately 67 existing centers nationwide.

“These centers show our commitment to working with doctors and hospitals in communities across the country, to identify leading institutions that meet clinically validated quality standards and deliver better outcomes in patient care,” said Allan Korn, M.D., BCBSA chief medical officer. The process used to select Blue Distinction Centers is based on clinical data from hospital registries. Each facility’s structure, processes and care outcomes are rigorously evaluated. These criteria include nationally endorsed quality measures, developed in collaboration with medical experts and professional organizations.

To learn more about Blue Distinction, go to [www.bcbsa.com/bluedistinction](http://www.bcbsa.com/bluedistinction).

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