



NEWS RELEASE

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Avera McKennan Hospital receives Blue Distinction Center transplant designation

DES MOINES, Iowa (Sept. 21, 2021) — Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield has recognized that Avera McKennan Hospital has achieved the new kidney transplant designation for adult kidney under the Blue Distinction® Centers for Transplants program. With this new kidney transplant designation, Wellmark members living with kidney failure will be able to find designated facilities in their area that provide accessible, higher quality transplant services.

To receive a Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants designation for kidney transplants, a health care facility must demonstrate success in meeting nationally established, objective quality measures along with delivering higher quality transplant services within the Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® network. Quality measures used in the evaluation are publicly reported by the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients. All Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants facilities must be fully accredited by a national accrediting organization, meet the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' certification requirements, and adhere to transplant guidelines from the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS).

Avera McKennan Hospital is also recognized by Wellmark for adult liver transplants.

Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants facilities have demonstrated their commitment to quality care, resulting in better overall outcomes for transplant patients. They offer a broad range of transplant services through a coordinated, streamlined transplant management program. To date, Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants has designated more than 149 facilities nationwide — with some facilities being designated for more than one program to represent a total of more than 365 transplant programs — that meet its evidence-based selection criteria.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, kidney diseases such as Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) are the ninth leading cause of death in America, impacting nearly 37 million Americans¹. With more than 23,000 kidney transplants performed in the United States², according to UNOS, kidney is the top transplant procedure for the year, highlighting the important role that the Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants play in providing patients with the knowledge and tools they desire along with the specialized kidney transplant care they need. The National Institute of Health's National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases cites that kidney failure also affects the nation's

¹ <https://www.kidney.org/news/newsroom/factsheets/KidneyDiseaseBasics>

² <https://unos.org/data/transplant-trends/>

minority and low-income patients disproportionately, when compared to Caucasian Americans, with African Americans being 3.5 times more likely to have ESRD³.

Blue Distinction Centers are nationally designated providers that show expertise in delivering improved patient safety and better health outcomes, based on objective measures that were developed with input from the medical community and leading accreditation and quality organizations.

The Blue Distinction Specialty Care program has helped patients find quality specialty care in the areas of bariatric surgery, cancer care, cardiac care, cellular immunotherapy, fertility care, gene therapy, knee and hip replacement, maternity care, spine surgery, substance use treatment and recovery, and transplants, while encouraging health care professionals to improve the care they deliver. Based on data-driven analysis of Blue Distinction Centers, designated facilities, compared to other hospitals and facilities, demonstrate better quality and improved outcomes for patients. On average, Blue Distinction Centers+ are also 20 percent more cost-efficient than non-Blue Distinction Center+ designated hospitals and facilities⁴.

For more information about the program and for a complete listing of the designated facilities, visit www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction.

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About Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Wellmark, Inc. (Wellmark.com) does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Wellmark and its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, including Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. and Wellmark Value Health Plan, Inc., insure or pay health benefit claims for more than 2 million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. and Wellmark Value Health Plan, Inc. are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 36 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide health care coverage for one in three Americans. BCBSA provides health care insights through The Health of America Reportseries and the national BCBS Health IndexSM For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit BCBS.com. bcbs.com. We also encourage you to connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and check out our [blog](#).

About Blue Distinction Centers

Blue Distinction Centers (BDC) met overall quality measures, developed with input from the medical community. A Local Blue Plan may require additional criteria for providers located in its own service area; for details, contact your Local Blue Plan. Blue Distinction Centers+ (BDC+) also met cost measures that address consumers' need for affordable healthcare. Each provider's cost of care is evaluated using data from its Local Blue Plan. Providers in CA, ID, NY, PA, and WA may lie in two Local Blue Plans' areas, resulting in two evaluations for cost of care; and their own Local Blue Plans decide whether one or both cost of care evaluation(s) must meet BDC+ national criteria. National criteria for BDC and BDC+ are displayed on www.bcbs.com. Individual outcomes may vary. For details on a provider's in-network status or your own policy's coverage, contact your Local Blue Plan and ask your provider before making an appointment. Neither Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association nor any Blue Plans are responsible for noncovered charges or other losses or damages resulting from Blue Distinction or other provider finder information or care received from Blue Distinction or other providers.

³ <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/kidney-disease>

⁴ BCBSA and registry data (where applicable), BDC/BDC+ eligible facilities vs. relevant comparison group. Results based on most recent designation cycle for each specialty. Savings based on BDC/BDC+ total episode cost.