

Advancing Quality & Equity in Maternal Care Across Kansas

Health Opportunities Conference
October 23rd, 2025

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas

BCBSKS Health Equity Journey

- 2021 Launch
- But we don't collect demographic data...
- Population Health and Health Equity
- Partnership opportunities



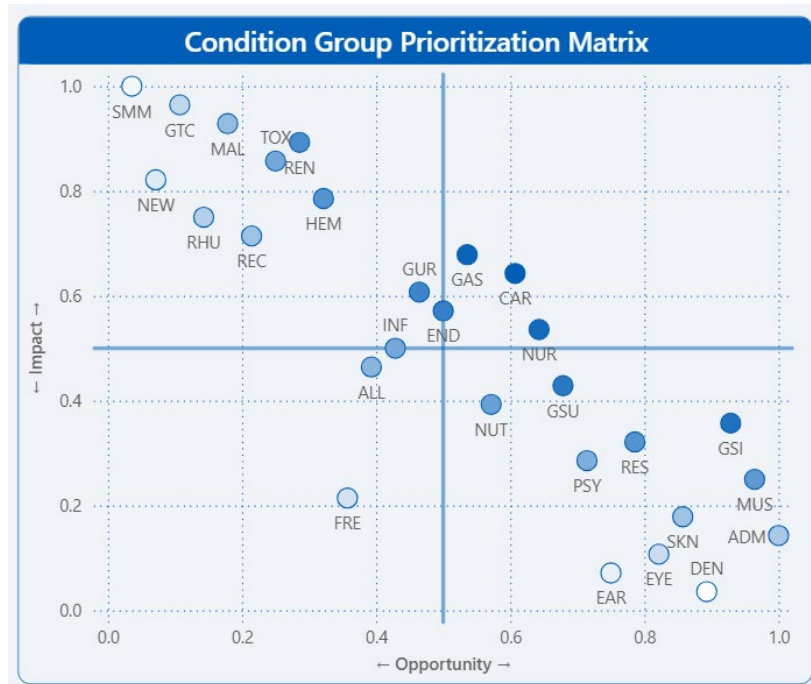


BCBSKS Commitment Statement

At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, we value you, your culture and community.

By improving outcomes at both the individual and community level, we're committed to pursuing a more accessible, inclusive and equitable system that helps everyone reach their full health potential.

Population Health Management



Condition Group Summary

- Cardiovascular, gastrointestinal/hepatic, and general signs/symptoms conditions are among the highest priority for BCBSKS members, with high prevalence and cost impacts ¹ ² .
- Genetic, renal, and severe maternal morbidity conditions have the highest rates of unplanned inpatient admissions, indicating significant acute care needs ³ .
- Musculoskeletal and skin conditions are common but have lower associated costs and unplanned admissions compared to other groups ¹ ² .
- Endocrine and neurologic conditions show moderate prevalence and cost, but neurologic issues are prioritized higher due to their impact ¹ ² .
- Allergy and psychosocial conditions are frequent but rank lower in priority, reflecting moderate cost and utilization ¹ ² .

Created with AI. Inaccuracies are possible. [Read terms](#)

Health Equity

Your culture. Your health.
Our commitment.

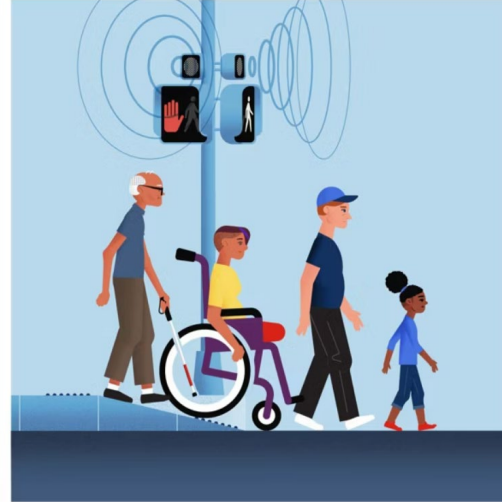
EQUALITY:

Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.



EQUITY:

Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.



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Healthy equity means making sure everyone has a fair chance to be healthy – no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have.

Areas of Health Focus



Maternal Health



Behavioral Health



Cardiovascular Disease



Diabetes

Guiding Principles

For the Health Equity Program



DATA

Use data effectively to measure health outcomes



INITIATIVES

Scale effective health improvement programs



HEALTH OUTCOMES

Work to improve health outcomes



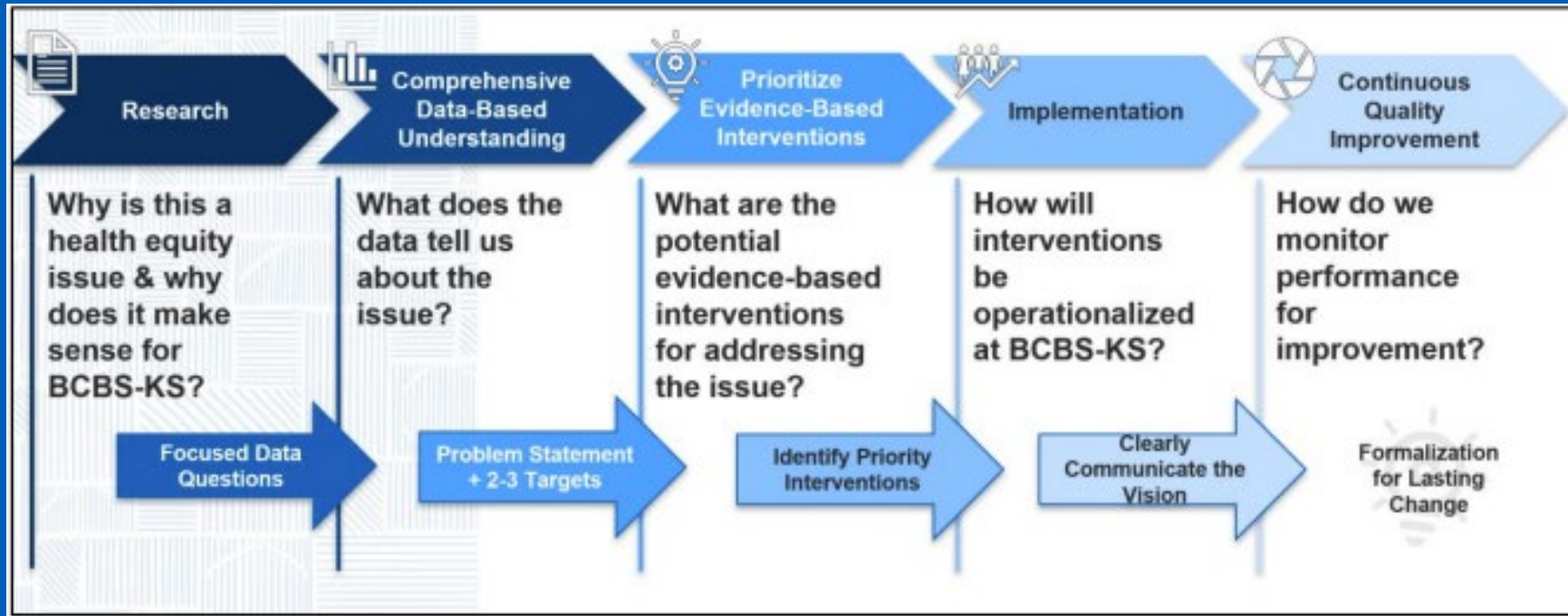
PARTNERSHIPS

Lean into partnerships at the community level



HEALTH POLICY

Influence health policy at the local & state level



Framework for Addressing Health Outcomes

Maternal Health



Real World Example

How does the process look in practice?





Research



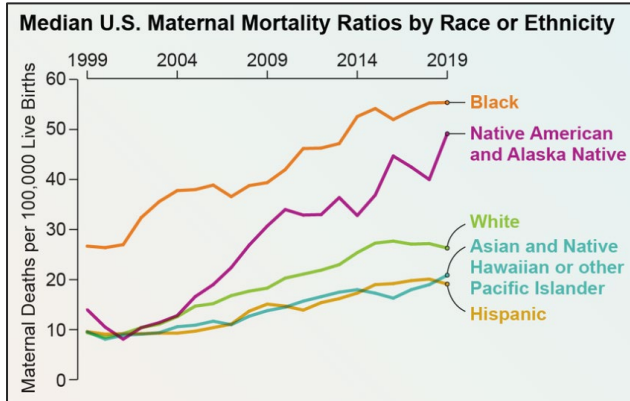
Understanding Maternal Health: Why maternal health is a priority

JULY 25, 2023 | 9 MIN READ

Why Maternal Mortality Rates Are Getting Worse across the U.S.

A new study shows U.S. maternal mortality rates are increasing, and health care providers and advocacy groups are racing to build better care for new parents

BY LUCY TU EDITED BY LAUREN J. YOUNG



Identified U.S. and state public health issue

Known health disparities – Black & Hispanic women having higher rates of negative outcomes

Extent of the problem unknown within BCBSKS membership

High-cost event

BCBS – Association priority area



Comprehensive
Data-Based
Understanding

Build the Project to Understand Who is At-Risk



Broad Business Questions Identified:

1. Does the BCBSKS membership population experience Severe Maternal Morbidity (SMM) events?
2. If so, what are the priority populations experiencing SMM outcomes? Are there disparities occurring?
3. Are SMM events more costly than non-SMM events?

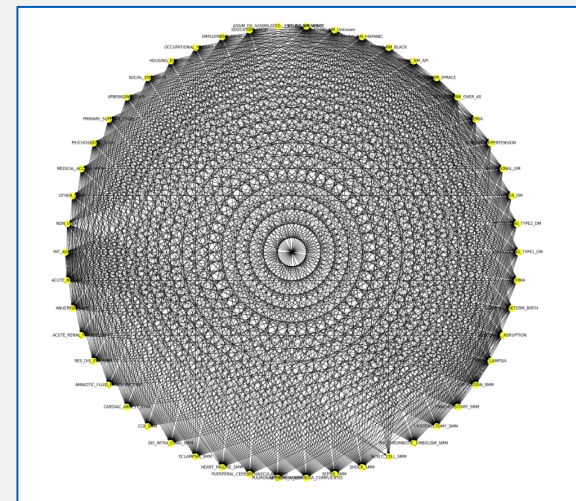
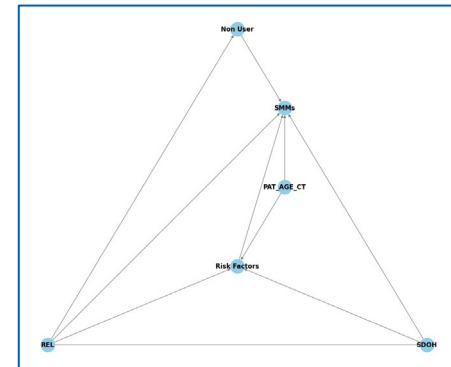




Embarked on a partnership with health analytics team.

Methodology:

- Claims data 2018-2024
- ICD 9 and 10 codes from AIM and the CDC to determine SMM events
- **Causal Inference:** process of identifying and quantifying the causal effect of one variable on another
 - Propensity Score Matching
 - Propensity Score Weighting
 - Inverse Propensity Weighting





Preliminary Results



From 2019-2022, severe maternal morbidity rate:

- **58.0 per 10,000** at time of delivery
- **18.0 per 10,000** postpartum

Kansas rate 62.1/10,000 pregnancy hospitalizations.

Lack of data led to identified challenges.

- Large percentages of unknown race & ethnicity data.
- SMM events are rare in membership population.

One small detour...

**Plug our sociodemographic data
project.**



Sociodemographic Data Collection Project

What: Members can self-report their sociodemographic data directly to BCBSKS

Why: Very limited accessible sociodemographic data

How: Form available in BlueAccess (primary member portal)



Members - we need your help

With just a few demographics, you can help inform new programs and solutions that support more inclusive, affordable and accessible health care in Kansas.

What?

Provide your race, ethnicity, language and sexual orientation.

Why?

Your data helps us identify health care trends, issues and opportunities to ensure Kansans receive appropriate care in a timely manner.

How?*

Complete the optional demographic information form in BlueAccess.

* Submission is only available through BlueAccess at this time. Certain plans may not be eligible for participation.

We promise:

- Your data is protected health information and will not be shared.
- Your responses won't affect your coverage or premiums.

[Complete the Demographic Information Form \(Log In Required\) →](#)

Sonia's Account

Home > My Account

Account information and settings

 **Contact details**
View or update your contact information, including your phone numbers, email addresses and mailing addresses.
[Edit Contact Details](#)

 **Communication preferences**
Customize how you would like to receive important information about your plan.
[Edit Communication Preferences](#)

 **Duplicate coverage**
Let us know if you or anyone on your policy has additional health insurance coverage.
[Add Additional Insurance](#)

 **Support and assistance**
Get your questions answered by connecting with our customer service team.
[Contact Customer Service](#)

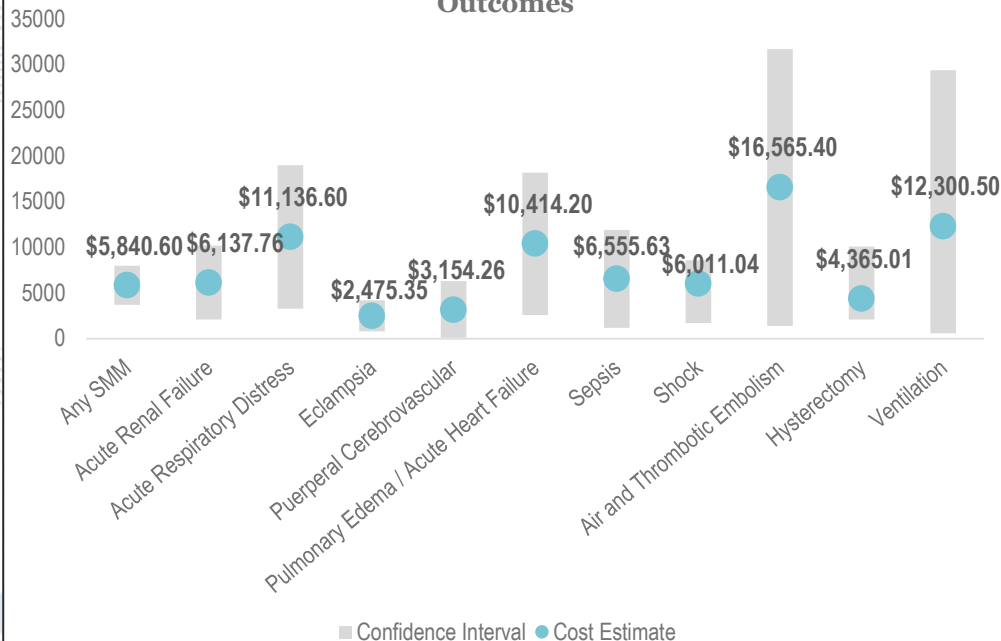
 **Demographic Information**
Share your demographic information to help us understand health trends and improve community health.
[Demographic Information Form](#)



Preliminary Results

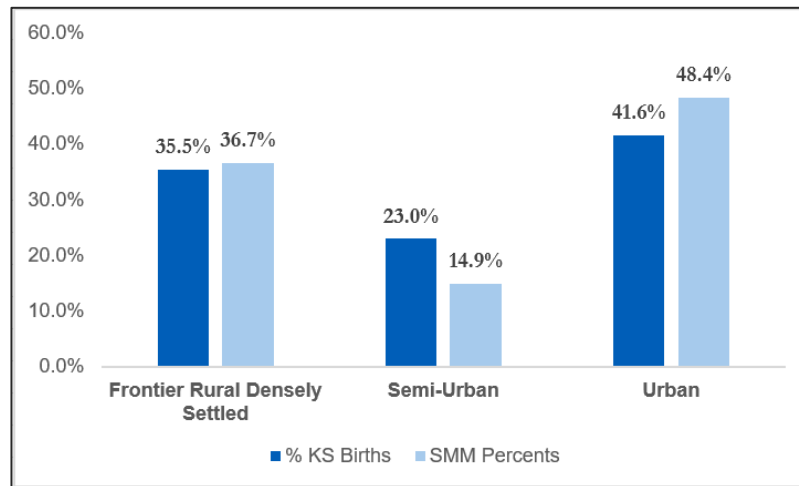


Statistically Significant Increased Costs for SMM Health Outcomes



Left: SMM events are rare but very costly for the healthcare system; prevention is likely to have a high ROI

Bottom: Proportion of SMM events is highest in Urban areas followed by Rural areas





Adapting to Gain Additional Insights

Challenge: SMM events are rare in membership; good, but leads to less statistical power in analysis

Solution: Added maternal health risk factors

- More common
- Disparities within risk factors exist

Lesson Learned:
Be adaptable & adjust as needed

SMM Risk Factors

Anemia	Diabetes – Type 1
Asthma	Diabetes – Type 2
BMI >40 (at delivery)	Placental Abruption
Chronic Hypertension	Pre-eclampsia
Diabetes – Gestational	Pre-Term Birth

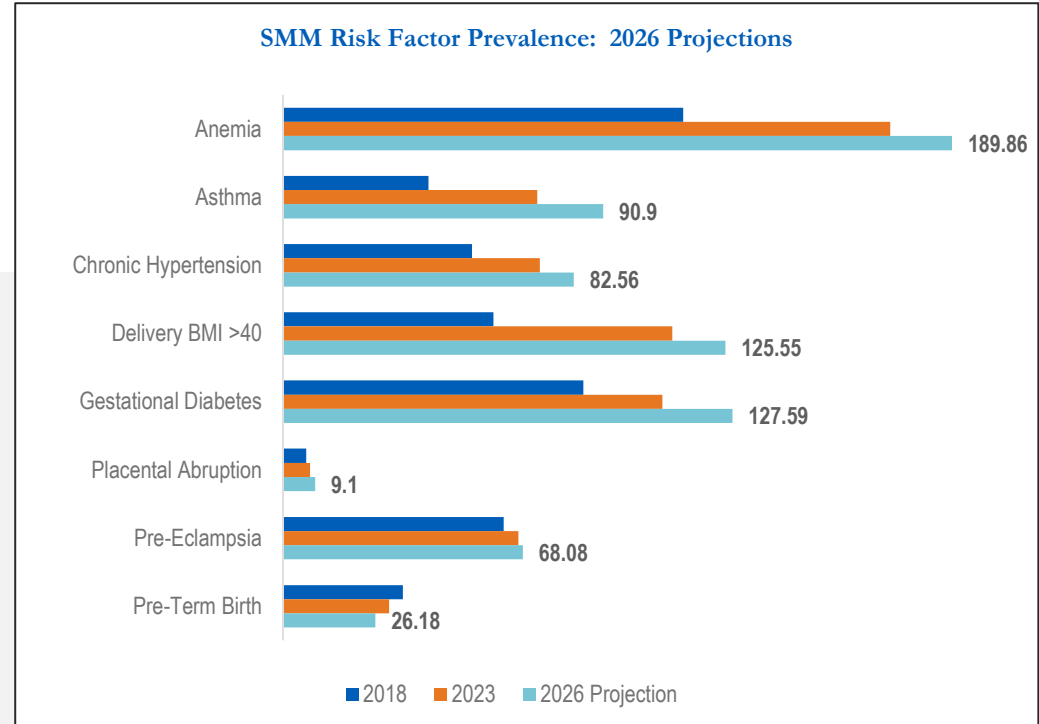


Comprehensive
Data-Based
Understanding

Expanded Analysis Adds Nuance



- **Anemia** is the highest projected risk factor in 2026.
- **Gestational Diabetes & Delivery BMI >40** are also projected to be high.
- **Pre-Term Birth** is the only one projected to decline.





Comprehensive
Data-Based
Understanding

Expanded Analysis Adds Nuance



Race / Ethnicity	Anemia	Asthma	Chronic HTN	Delivery BMI >40	Gest. DM	Type 1 DM	Type 2 DM	Pre - Eclampsia
Asian – Pacific Islander	6.2%				14.3%		2.1%	
Black	17.0%	7.2%		6.8%			3.1%	4.8%
Hispanic	2.0%						1.6%	
White		2.0%	2.8%			0.2%	0.6%	

Notable:

- **Black Women** – five (5) significant relationships with risk factors
 - Most at risk for anemia
- **Asian-Chinese Women** – high risk for Gestational Diabetes



Comprehensive Data-Based Understanding

Develop Products to Tell the BCBSKS Maternal Health Story

Improving maternal health outcomes for Kansans

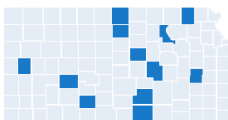
The first step in understanding the effects of health outcomes is to look at the data to understand what it's telling us. For the maternal health project, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS) team studied maternal health data for their members to decide how to take action to improve maternal health.

Severe maternal health events at BCBSKS

Severe maternal morbidity (SMM) health events are considered:

- Serious health problems.
- Near-miss events, meaning that had the health problem not been caught in time, the mother or baby could have died.
- To be rising across the United States, including Kansas.

12 counties have higher SMM rates.

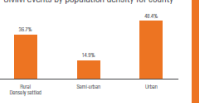


9 of those are rural counties.



Both urban and rural communities are at risk.

SMM events by population density for county



Nearly half of all BCBSKS SMM events are in urban counties.

← Infographics break the data down into more digestible formats.



Reports

Understanding the extent and the nature of the health issue is a crucial part of health equity. Reports provide data and analysis to identify, understand and address health disparities.

FEATURED REPORT

Maternal health

Mothers can face serious health problems during pregnancy and childbirth. View our maternal health report to learn more about these problems and how BCBSKS helps moms stay healthy.

[Maternal Health Report \(PDF\) →](#)



Report outlining the analysis published on our website.

www.bcbsks.com/health-equity



Prioritize
Evidence-Based
Interventions

Data-Driven Interventions to Improve Maternal Health

Promotion of Blue Distinction Centers for Maternal Health

Model to identify high-risk pregnancies

Integration into BCBSKS wellness program for maternal care

Partnership with Baby Talk

Blue
Distinction[®]
Center+
Maternity

Baby
Talk

Have a healthy pregnancy

HealthyOptions.

When you enroll in our program, we will help you have a healthy pregnancy, delivery and baby. Through one-on-one, personalized telephone calls, one of our nurses will guide you by providing:

- Education to help manage health between provider visits
- Materials to help plan delivery and mother care at home
- Added support during pregnancy
- Post-delivery follow up

Enroll today! Visit bcbks.com/enroll or call 800-520-3137.

Visit us at bcbks.com



15-128 12/20



BlueCross BlueShield
Kansas

1133 SW Topeka Blvd, Topeka, KS 66629

An independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.



Implementation



Baby Talk – KU Wichita Pediatrics

*“We are so unbelievably grateful for your **partnership & support** as we educate and help families thrive – together we’re making a **lasting generational impact on Kansas families!**”*

~ Joy Miller, KU School of Medicine-Wichita

Free prenatal classes (6) that includes incentives upon completion.

Program Highlights:

- Classes available in Spanish & English
- Virtual & In-Person
- Community-based Intervention (not limited to members)

Outcomes:

- Increased rates of full-term birth, including statistically significant understanding from the mother
- Higher rates of initiating breastfeeding
- Served participants in 42 of the 103 BCBSKS service counties.

BIENVENIDOS A BABY TALK!



Continuous Quality Improvement



How We Monitor, Measure, & Improve

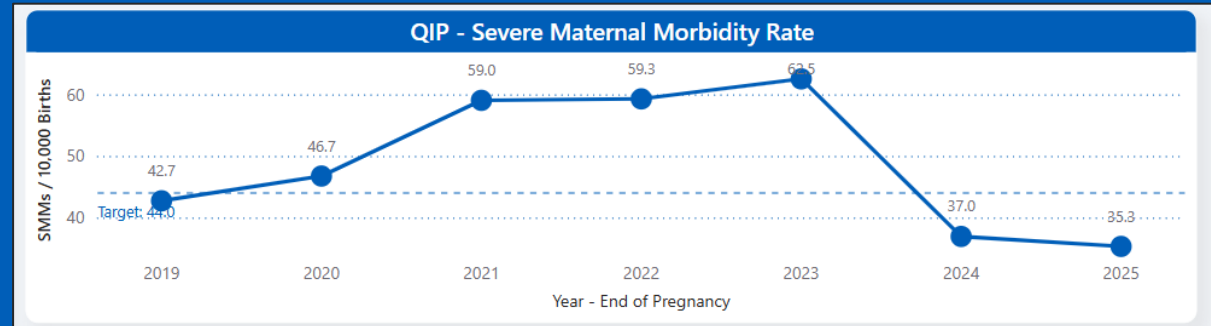
Identification of metrics

Integration with Quality Management Committee

Quality Improvement Plan

Regular monitoring and tracking

Measure Value	Target Value	Status
42.47	42.32	●
0	4	●
0	60	●
20.2%	23.4%	●
63.6%	66.9%	●
77.9%	79.8%	●
69.1%	74.0%	●
100.0%	85.0%	●
0.0%	10.0%	●
1.5%	2.8%	●
0.0%	80.0%	●
0.0%	80.0%	●
0.0%	80.0%	●
68.3%	80.0%	●
7	3	●
14	16	●
598.79	188.00	●
35.34	44.00	●
20.4%	9.3%	●
39.0%	10.0%	●
64.6%	76.8%	●
59.4%	77.7%	●
62.6%	62.3%	●
3.4%	5.0%	●
97.2%	84.3%	●
0.0%	80.0%	●
29.3%	50.0%	●
		29.6%



Blue Distinction Center – Maternal Health

Evidence-Based Quality Improvement



Blue Distinction Specialty Care

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) program focused on health care that is:

- High quality
- Safe
- Cost efficient

Two Recognitions:

Blue Distinction Centers: Quality care, treatment expertise, & better patient results

Blue Distinction Center+: Adds the dimension of affordable care



Areas of Specialty Care

Bariatric (Weight-Loss Surgery)

Cancer Care

Cardiac Care

Cellular Immunotherapy

Fertility Care

Gene Therapy

Knee & Hip Replacement

Maternity Care

Spine Surgery

Substance Use Treatments

Transplants

Why Focus on Blue Distinction Centers?



BCBS-Association: Nationally there are many benefits to BDC recognition for hospitals and patients.

We wanted to look at the benefit for BCBSKS members.

Our data shows that BDCs lower the rates of **cesarean births, episiotomies, elective births**, and **lowers median cost** of birth events by ~\$1,000.

- C-Sections: 13.0% rate compared to non-BDC at 20.0%
- Episiotomies: 0.8% compared to non-BDC at 2.0%
- Elective Births: 2.0% compared to non-BDC at 4.6%

Benefits to Facilities

Demonstrate Alignment to Evidence-Based Quality Program

National and State-wide Promotion

Better Patient Outcomes

Cost-Efficiency



Examples of Requirements

Quality Measures:

- Accreditation
- Quality Improvement Program
- Protocols (hemorrhage, hypertension)
- Collection of demographic data
- Drills and exercises

Patient Outcome Measures:

- Elective delivery rate
- Cesarean section rate



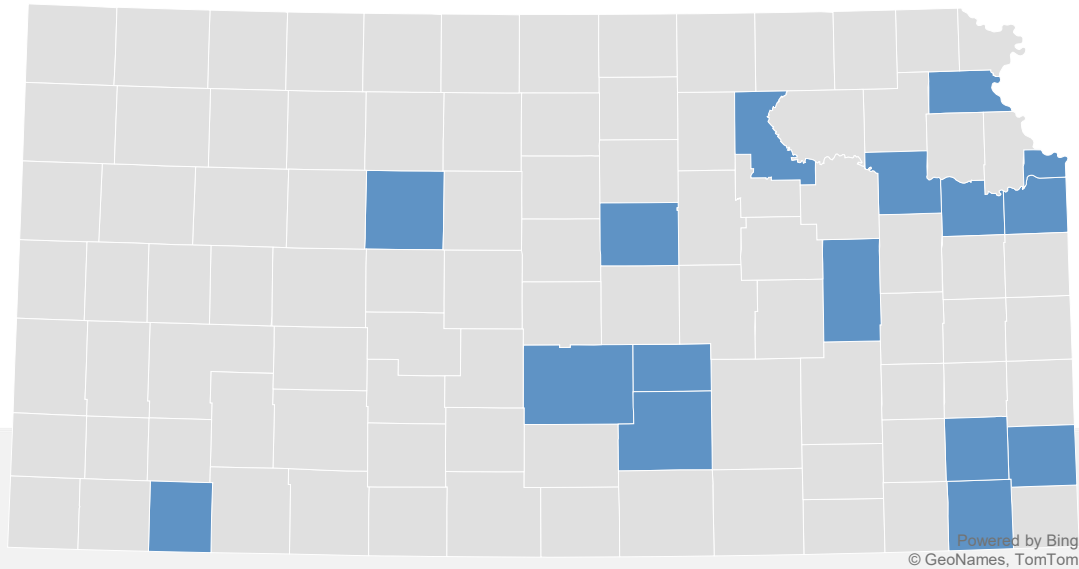
Alignment to National Standards

BDC programs establish practices that are nationally consistent for evaluating quality and value of care.

National Alignment:

- Health and Human Services
- American College of Gynecologists
- Alliance for Innovative Maternal Health
- California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative

Kansas Counties w Blue Distinction Centers - MH



Adventhealth South – Overland Park
Advent Health – Shawnee Mission
Amberwell Atchison
Ascension Via Christi – Manhattan
Ascension Via Christi – Wichita
Ascension Via Christi - Pittsburg

Hays Medical Center
Hutchinson Reg Med Center
Labette Medical Center
Lawrence Memorial Hospital
Neosho Memorial Reg Med Center
Newman Regional Health

Salina Regional Health Center
Southwest Medical Center
Stormont Vail Hospital
University of Kansas – St Francis
University of Kansas Hospital



Quality Management Committee

Focus on Improving Maternal Health:

- Increased BDC recognitions in Kansas
- Integrated the work into a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
- Reviewed at bi-monthly meetings for progress

Goal: 3 new facilities in a year;
from 13 to 16 facilities

Quality Improvement Plan Strategies

Make Progress Effectively & Efficiently

- Aligned all internal partners & identified responsibilities
- Designated owners for key program aspects
- Identified & provided a subject matter expert (on-staff nurse with OB-GYN experience)
- Worked closely with the Association & facilities every step of the way

Results

Two new BDC facilities. Both qualified for BDC+ status.

Working with several other facilities to work on the process.

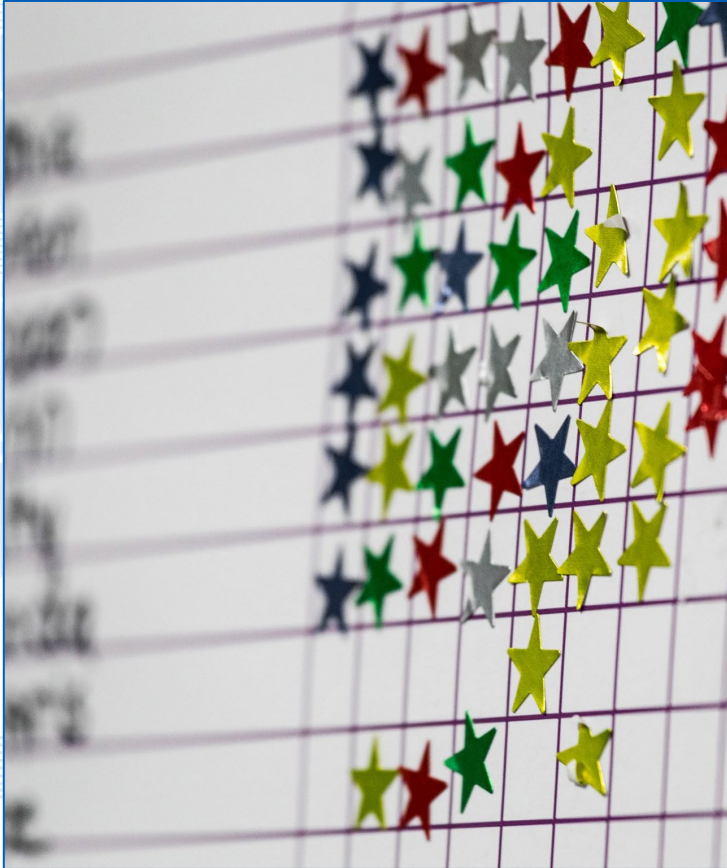
Newton Medical Center



Neosho Regional Medical Center



Best Practices for Success



Partnership & Collaboration Partnerships with local hospital systems, internal divisions, and the BCBS-Association

Subject Matter Expertise Nurse with labor & delivery experience can walk alongside facilities

Focused Effort Intentional focus from BCBSKS staff helped the program grown

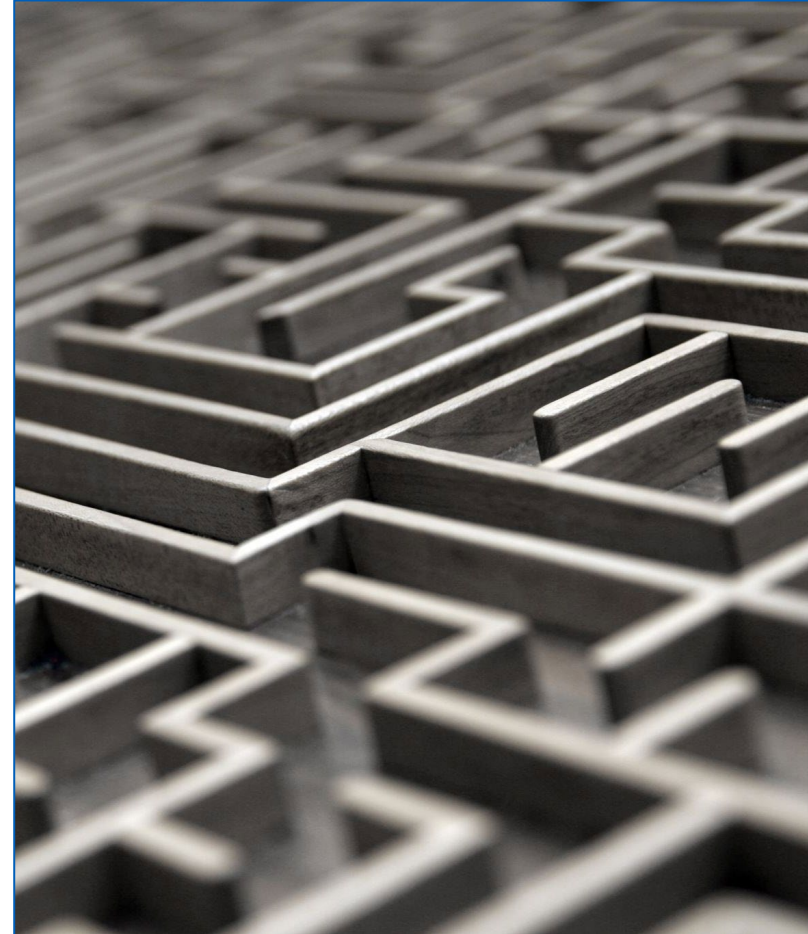
Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) Plan template helped facilities identify the best path for making progress on their challenge

Challenges

Accreditation Requirements BDC requires accreditation, which can be challenging for smaller facilities

Staffing Smaller facilities may not have staff to dedicate towards working on this or understand data needs

New Best Practices Newer best practices can be challenging to learn and adopt, ex: Trauma Informed Model of Care



Additional Areas of Focus

Projects to support Vision 2030



Postpartum Depression Analysis



Rural Health



Self-Reported Data Collection



Language Access



Cardiovascular
Health



Accreditation



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