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For Immediate Release

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Catholic Health Hospitals Recognized for High Quality Maternity Care

Buffalo, NY – Three Catholic Health hospitals in Erie and Niagara counties have been recognized by BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York for high quality maternity care as part of its Blue Distinction Specialty Care program. **Sisters of Charity Hospital, Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, and Mount St. Mary’s Hospital** were named Blue Distinction® Centers (BDC) for Maternity Care. The three hospitals delivered over 5,700 babies in 2019.

Racial and ethnic disparities are persistent and widespread across maternal healthcare. Compared to similarly developed countries such as Canada, Germany, and Australia, the United State has the highest maternal mortality rate (MMR), at 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, with the MMR steadily increasing since 2000¹. According to the CDC, non-Hispanic Black women are two to three times more likely to die from preventable or treatable pregnancy-related complications compared to white women².

To help address gaps in care and ensure better outcomes, The BlueCross BlueShield Association enhanced its quality evaluation for the Maternity Care program looking at key factors in the U.S. maternal health crisis, including preventable or treatable pregnancy-related conditions, high C-section rates, and racial and ethnic disparities in maternal healthcare.

“This designation recognizes the hard work and dedication of our doctors, nurses, midwives, residents, OB/GYN chairs, and our entire care team,” said Anthony Pivarunus, DO, chair of Obstetrics & Gynecology for Catholic Health. “This achievement is a testament to the compassionate, personalized care our team provides and the importance they place on quality, safety, health equity, and ongoing improvement strategies which focus on healthy moms and healthy babies across the Buffalo-Niagara region.”

In 2020, [the Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity Care Program](#) was expanded beyond traditional outcome measures to include assessments of internal quality improvement, data collection and dissemination, and internal protocols that better address clinical quality and equity issues in maternity care. New in the evaluation cycle, facilities must collect race ethnicity data, have a maternal quality improvement program, commence drills and simulations for adverse events, and have dedicated protocols and procedures for the management of hypertension and hemorrhage. In addition, they must meet clinical outcome metrics at a higher standard than required previously and show statistically significant differences in key clinical outcomes compared to their peers.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>

² https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6835a3.htm?s_cid=mm6835a3_w

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Since 2006, 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 healthcare professionals to improve the care they deliver. Research shows that, compared to other providers, those designated as Blue Distinction Centers demonstrate better quality and improved outcomes for patients.

In 2018, facilities that received designations under the Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity Care program cared for more than 40% of Blue Cross and Blue Shield commercially insured women giving birth across the country.

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About BlueCross BlueShield of WNY

BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York is a division of HealthNow New York Inc., one of New York's leading health care companies that provides access to quality health care and solutions for members throughout Upstate New York. Since 1936, BlueCross BlueShield has helped millions of people gain access to health care. Headquartered in Buffalo, NY, the company is an independent Licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association. As the region's leading health plan, serving over 800,000 members, BlueCross BlueShield believes in taking small steps towards healthier living because - Healthy Changes Everything®. You can visit our website at www.bcbswny.com.

About the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross 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 Report](#) series and the national BCBS Health IndexSM. For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit 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.