



*North Carolina*  
**State Health Plan**

for Teachers and State Employees

[www.shpnc.org](http://www.shpnc.org)

### **Bariatric Surgery Benefit**

Blue Distinction Centers (BDCs) for Bariatric Surgery – Why the sub-network?

- The 11 Bariatric BDCs in NC performed 71% of bariatric surgeries in 2007
- Readmission rates for complications were lower in BDC facilities
- BDC costs were \$1900 less than non-BDC for Roux en Y bariatric procedures for a total net savings of \$684,190 in 2007
- Length of stay in the hospital was less in BDC facilities

The quality outcomes of Bariatric Blue Distinction Centers are higher for this complicated and life altering surgical procedure. BDCs must meet quality outcome requirements and must perform a higher number of surgeries to meet the BDC participation criteria.

The State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees is committed to quality care for our members. In order to ensure the highest quality of care for bariatric surgery, the Plan is limiting the benefit to bariatric surgery performed at Blue Distinction Centers (BDC) located in North Carolina and in other states. The BDCs have met national standards around quality outcomes and numbers of procedures performed.

**Prior approval requests for Bariatric Surgery in non-BDC Centers will continue to be accommodated through surgery dates of June 30, 2010 based on current benefits and medical necessity criteria.** Starting January 1, 2010, BCBSNC will inform non-BDC providers calling for prior approval of Bariatric Surgery that the surgery will no longer be covered at non-BDC providers **beginning July 1, 2010.**

**Effective July 1, 2010, surgeries performed at non-BDCs will not be a covered benefit and prior approval will not be granted to non-BDC facilities.**

Complications arising from surgeries performed at a non-BDC will be covered under emergency services criteria. Once the emergent situation is stabilized, the Plan will deny coverage for additional services.

**Bariatric surgeries for which prior approval is not obtained will not be covered regardless of the facility's BDC status.** This is not a departure from current Plan requirements. Members who live out of the state of NC are required to obtain prior approval for this and other covered procedures.

Given the impact to members and the provider community, BCBSNC will partner with the Plan to educate bariatric surgery providers of the change in benefit beginning January 1, 2010 for a July 1, 2010 effective date.

The Plan will notify members of the benefit change in the enrollment kits scheduled for release in the spring of 2010. Customer services staff will receive a Frequently Asked Questions document to assist with educating members on the benefit change.