



TO: Interested Organizations
FROM: Patrick Dahill, Assistant Vice President, Policy
DATE: August 2, 2017
RE: 2017 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds—Mid-Year Update

This document reports national benchmarks and national and regional thresholds for HEDIS^{®1} measures and HEDIS/CAHPS^{®22} 5.0H survey results and will be used to score health plans for accreditation year 2017.

B&T Format

This memo does not include the benchmarks and thresholds by measure. The 2017 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds are available as an Excel workbook in the NCQA Download Center (<https://downloads.ncqa.org/customer/Login.aspx>).

Auditors, software vendors, survey vendors and HEDIS and Accreditation primary contacts have access to the Benchmarks and Thresholds file in the Download Center. Access has been limited for all other customers, to ensure that the benchmarks are used solely for their intended purpose (i.e., to estimate an organization's HEDIS score) and not for general benchmarking or commercial purposes.

If your organization is in a group noted above but does not have access to the Benchmarks and Thresholds in the Download Center, submit a request via the Policy Clarification Support (PCS) system at <http://my.ncqa.org/>.

New Measures

NCQA did not add new measures to Accreditation 2017 scoring.

Retired Measures

NCQA retired the following measures from the HEDIS measurement set. Organizations accredited on previous years' standards will be scored NA; however, the NA will not count against the maximum NA threshold.

- Cholesterol Management for Patients With Cardiovascular Conditions—LDL-C Screening (*all product lines*).
- Comprehensive Diabetes Care—LDL-C Screening (*all product lines*).
- Glaucoma Screening in Older Adults (*Medicare*).

¹HEDIS[®] is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

²CAHPS[®] is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

- Human Papillomavirus Vaccine for Female Adolescents (*Medicaid and commercial*).³
- Use of Appropriate Medications for People With Asthma (*Medicaid*).

NCQA retired the following measures from Accreditation 2015 scoring. Organizations accredited on the 2014 standards or earlier will be scored using the organization's submitted rate.

- Childhood Immunization Status—Combo 2 (*commercial and Medicaid*).
- Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Testing (*all product lines*).
- Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD (*all product lines*).
- CAHPS How Well Doctors Communicate (*all product lines*).

Accreditation 2017 Scoring

As described in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Health Plans*, NCQA requires organizations to submit specified HEDIS measures and CAHPS 5.0H survey results annually. NCQA determines the HEDIS measure portion of the score by comparing organization results with a national benchmark (the 90th percentile of national results) and with regional and national thresholds (the 75th, 50th and 25th percentiles). NCQA uses the higher of two scores: the result based on comparison with the average of the regional and national thresholds, *or* the result based on comparison with national thresholds.

NCQA determines the CAHPS 5.0H results portion of the score by comparing organization results with a national benchmark (the 90th percentile) and with national thresholds (the 75th, 50th and 25th percentiles). NCQA does not consider regional thresholds because regional variation in the data is not as significant.

Organizations submit:

- Two rates for Prenatal and Postpartum Care (*Medicaid only*).
- Five rates for Comprehensive Diabetes Care.
- Two rates for Antidepressant Medication Management.
- Two rates for Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication.
- Two rates for Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation.
- Three rates for Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents.

For these measures, each rate is scored against its threshold or benchmark. Individual scores are averaged to determine the overall score on each measure.

The Comprehensive Diabetes Care average is doubled and counts as two measure scores.

Note: *Medical Assistance With Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation—Advising Smokers to Quit will be scored NA for the commercial product line for accreditation year 2017; however, the NA will not count against the maximum NA threshold.*

³The HPV vaccination was added to the Immunizations for Adolescents (IMA) measure in HEDIS 2017. For Accreditation 2017, HPV will be scored NA. Organizations will continue to be scored on the IMA Combination 1 rate. For Accreditation 2018, organizations will be scored on the IMA Combination 2 rate, which includes the HPV vaccination.

Mid-Year Updates

- Updated the benchmarks and thresholds in the Mid-Year Update Excel file* for the following measures:
 - Colorectal Cancer Screening (*commercial and Medicare product lines*).
 - Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation (*all product lines*).
 - Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection (*commercial and Medicaid product lines*).
 - Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis (*commercial and Medicaid product lines*).
 - Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (*all product lines*).
 - Potentially Harmful Drug-Disease Interactions in the Elderly (*Medicare product line*).
 - Use of High-Risk Medications in the Elderly (*Medicare product line*).
- Updated the Measure ID number for the following measures:
 - Colorectal Cancer Screening (*commercial and Medicare product lines*).
 - Potentially Harmful Drug-Disease Interactions in the Elderly (*Medicare product line*).
 - Use of High-Risk Medications in the Elderly (*Medicare product line*).
- Updated the Medicaid Adjustment points in the applicable measures. Italicized measures in this section indicate added measures or a change in adjustment points from the initial 2017 Benchmarks and Thresholds memo.
- Removed the adjustment points for the following measures:
 - Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—Bronchodilator (*Region 6*)
- Updated the special scoring rules for the following measure:
 - Use of High-Risk Medications in the Elderly (*Medicare product line*).
- Added the national O/E ratio that will be used to score the Plan All-Cause Readmissions measure in Appendix A.

*Note: Organizations will need to download the updated Excel file in the Download Center.

May 2017 Updates

- Updated the benchmarks and thresholds for the following CAHPS measures:
 - Rating of All Health Care (*Medicaid Child*)
 - Coordination of Care (*Medicare*)
 - How Well Doctors Communicate (*commercial, Medicaid Adult and Child, Medicare*)
 - Getting Care Quickly (*Medicaid Child, Medicare*)
 - Getting Needed Care (*Medicaid Child, Medicare*)
 - Rating of Health Plan (*Medicaid Child, Medicare*)
 - Rating of Personal Doctor (*commercial, Medicaid Adult and Child, Medicare*)
 - Rating of Specialist Seen Most Often (*commercial, Medicaid Adult and Child, Medicare*)
 - Customer Service (*commercial, Medicaid Adult and Child*)

- Removed the Customer Service CAHPS measure from the Medicare product line.
- Added Special Scoring rule for Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Monitoring Diabetic Nephropathy (*Medicaid*)

Special Scoring Rules

The “Other scoring notes” column in the Excel workbook (refer to *B&T Format*, above) indicates which measures meet a special scoring threshold.

For measures where a higher rate indicates better performance, and the 90th percentile is 90 or above and the distribution for thresholds below the 90th percentile is within 5 percentage points, NCQA implements the following special scoring rules.

- If the special scoring threshold is at the **75th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or above the **national 75th percentile** receive **100% of the national points**.
- If the special scoring threshold is at the **50th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or above the **regional 50th percentile** receive **100% of the regional points**.
- If the special scoring threshold is at the **25th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or above the **regional 25th percentile** receive **100% of the regional points**.
- Plans with reported rates **below the regional 25th percentile** receive **68% of the regional points**.

For measures where a lower rate indicates better performance, and the 90th percentile is 10 or below and the distribution for thresholds below the 90th percentile is within 5 percentage points, NCQA implements the following special scoring rule.

- If the special scoring threshold is at the **75th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or below the **national 75th percentile** receive **100% of the national points**.
- If the special scoring threshold is at the **50th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or below the **regional 50th percentile** receive **100% of the regional points**.
- If the special scoring rule is at the **25th percentile**, plans with reported rates at or below the **regional 25th percentile** receive **100% of the regional points**.
- Plans with reported rates **above the regional 25th percentile** receive **68% of the regional points**.

Note: The special scoring rules are applicable to Medicaid scoring at the national level only, not the regional level.

Scoring for Marketplace Product Lines

For Renewal Surveys and applicable First Surveys, NCQA will continue to score the Marketplace product line on accreditation standards only, and will evaluate whether the organization continues to be a Qualified Health Plan under CMS requirements.

If the organization did not submit Quality Rating System (QRS) measures to CMS and is not listed on Healthcare.gov, NCQA will not accredit the Marketplace product line or, if the organization is accredited, will revoke its accreditation status. If the organization is not required by CMS to report QRS measures but is listed on Healthcare.gov, NCQA will discuss the issue with the organization before revoking accreditation status.

Scoring for Medicaid Product Lines

NCQA allows Medicaid product lines to be scored on the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 5.0H Adult Version, on the Child Version or on the Children With Chronic Conditions Survey questions/composites. General population results are used to calculate both the Child and the Children With Chronic Conditions surveys; all organizations (including those whose accreditation score is based on a previous standards year) may submit either version.

Adjusted Accreditation Points for Medicaid Plans by Region

Because a limited number of Medicaid plans submit audited HEDIS results, NCQA cannot publish regional thresholds for the HEDIS measures. However, NCQA developed adjustment factors using the commercial regional and national thresholds, when substantial differences between national and regional measures were evident. Refer to *Appendix B: HHS Regions*.

Point adjustments for Medicaid plans are outlined below by region and apply to all reporting products or to any combination of products.

Medicaid plans should add the following percentage points to their rates (before scoring).

REGION 1: Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont

HMO/POS/PPO

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control subtract 8 percentage points

REGION 2: New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

HMO/POS/PPO

Breast Cancer Screening add 2 percentage points

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Blood Pressure Control <140/90 add 5 percentage points

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control subtract 4 percentage points

Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 18–64 add 3 percentage points

Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate add 2 percentage points

*Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—
Bronchodilator* add 3 percentage points

*Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—
Systemic Corticosteroid* add 4 percentage points

REGION 4: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee

HMO/POS/PPO

Adult BMI Assessment add 5 percentage points

Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase add 4 percentage points

Antidepressant Medication Management—Continuation Phase add 4 percentage points

Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection add 4 percentage points

Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis add 2 percentage points

Childhood Immunization Status—Combo 10 add 6 percentage points

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Blood Pressure Control <140/90 add 6 percentage points

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam add 9 percentage points

Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0% add 4 percentage points

Controlling High Blood Pressure add 6 percentage points

Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 18–64 add 4 percentage points

Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness	add 8 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1	add 6 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate	add 2 percentage points
<i>Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation— Bronchodilator</i>	<i>add 3 percentage points</i>
Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation— Systemic Corticosteroid	add 4 percentage points
Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Postpartum Care	add 4 percentage points
<i>Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Timeliness of Prenatal Care</i>	<i>add 2 percentage points</i>
Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain	add 8 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—BMI Percentile	add 6 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition	add 5 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity	add 4 percentage points

REGION 5: Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin

HMO/POS/PPO

Chlamydia Screening in Women	add 3 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control	subtract 3 percentage points

REGION 6: Arkansas, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma

HMO/POS/PPO

Adult BMI Assessment	add 5 percentage points
Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase	add 5 percentage points
Antidepressant Medication Management—Continuation Phase	add 5 percentage points
Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis	add 8 percentage points
Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection	add 10 percentage points
Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis	add 5 percentage points
Breast Cancer Screening	add 5 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening	add 4 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2	add 7 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 10	add 7 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Blood Pressure Control <140/90	add 7 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam	add 10 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0%	add 10 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Testing	add 2 percentage points
Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness	add 10 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Initiation	add 5 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Continuation	add 4 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate	add 2 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate	add 3 percentage points
<i>Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—Systemic Corticosteroid</i>	<i>add 5 percentage points</i>
Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Postpartum Care	add 4 percentage points
<i>Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Timeliness of Prenatal Care</i>	<i>add 6 percentage points</i>

Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain.....	add 5 percentage points
Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD	add 4 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—BMI Percentile.....	add 10 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition	add 10 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity	add 10 percentage points

REGION 7: Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska

HMO/POS/PPO

Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis.....	add 5 percentage points
Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection	add 7 percentage points
<i>Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis.....</i>	<i>add 4 percentage points</i>
Cervical Cancer Screening	add 3 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2	add 10 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 10	add 7 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 9 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0%	add 5 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Initiation	add 2 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Continuation	add 4 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1	add 10 percentage points
<i>Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Timeliness of Prenatal Care</i>	<i>add 10 percentage points</i>
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—BMI Percentile	add 10 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition	add 10 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity.....	add 10 percentage points

REGION 8: Colorado, North Dakota, Utah, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming

HMO/POS/PPO

Breast Cancer Screening.....	add 3 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening	add 3 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2	add 2 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 8 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0%	add 3 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Medical Attention for Nephropathy	add 2 percentage points
Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness	add 3 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Initiation	add 5 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Continuation	add 5 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1	add 6 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate.....	add 2 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate	add 2 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—BMI Percentile	add 5 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition	add 3 percentage points

Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for
Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity..... add 4 percentage points

REGION 9: American Samoa, California, Hawaii, Arizona, Guam, Nevada

HMO/POS/PPO

Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase add 5 percentage points
 Antidepressant Medication Management—Continuation Phase add 4 percentage points
 Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis add 6 percentage points
 Asthma Medication Ratio add 3 percentage points
 Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam..... add 5 percentage points
 Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Testing add 2 percentage points
 Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 18–64 add 3 percentage points
 Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Continuation add 3 percentage points
 Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Dependence Treatment—
 Engagement Rate..... add 3 percentage points
 Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate add 4 percentage points
 Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—Systemic
 Corticosteroid add 4 percentage points
 Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Postpartum Care add 3 percentage points
 Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD add 3 percentage points
 Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for
 Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition add 5 percentage points
 Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for
 Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity..... add 6 percentage points

REGION 10: Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Washington

HMO/POS/PPO

Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis add 4 percentage points
 Asthma Medication Ratio add 3 percentage points
 Breast Cancer Screening add 3 percentage points
 Cervical Cancer Screening add 6 percentage points
 Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2 add 3 percentage points
 Chlamydia Screening in Women..... add 4 percentage points
 Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness add 2 percentage points
 Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Initiation add 2 percentage points
 Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Timeliness of Prenatal Care add 4 percentage points
 Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD add 5 percentage points
 Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for
 Children/Adolescents—BMI Percentile add 10 percentage points
 Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for
 Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Physical Activity..... add 6 percentage points

Appendix A: Plan All-Cause Readmission Scoring

The Plan All-Cause Readmission measure is required for Accreditation 2017. Because this measure includes case-mix adjustment, it is reported as an observed-to-expected (O/E) ratio and modifications must be made to the traditional scoring model.

To identify meaningful distinctions between plans and maps for the general accreditation scoring framework, NCQA developed a three-level group of plans that use statistical significance testing.

Before comparing the plan's O/E thresholds outlined below, the plan's ratio will be divided by the national average O/E ratio to determine what percent above or below the national average the plan's ratio is. This calibrated value is then compared to 1.0 for scoring.

- A calibrated O/E ratio >1.0 means the plan had a below average O/E ratio, based on its case mix.
- A calibrated O/E ratio <1.0 means the plan had an above average O/E ratio, based on its case mix.

Plans with fewer than 150 observed events are scored NA. This score does not count against the maximum number of NA scores a plan can receive for accreditation scoring.

The following table includes the national average O/E ratio by product line.

Product Line	National Average O/E Ratio
Commercial	0.7285952350
Medicare*	0.8425565978

**For the Medicare product line, NCQA will use the national O/E Ratio for individuals 65 years and older to score organizations.*

The following table outlines the three-level grouping and points earned for each group.

PCR Scoring Rule	Percentage of Points Earned
Calibrated O/E <0.9 and 95% upper confidence interval <1.0	100%
Calibrated O/E not meaningfully and significantly different from 1.0 (i.e., $0.9 \leq O/E \leq 1.1$ or 95% confidence interval includes 1.0)	68%
Calibrated O/E >1.1 and 95% lower confidence interval >1.0	20%
Not Report (NR) or Biased Rate (BR) HEDIS Audit Result	0%
Plan's sample size <150	NA

Appendix B: HHS Regions

The regions used in this memo and in the Excel workbook align with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regions and are listed below for reference.

Region Number	Region Name	Covered States
1	Boston	Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont
2	New York	New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
3	Philadelphia	Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia
4	Atlanta	Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee
5	Chicago	Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin
6	Dallas	Arkansas, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma
7	Kansas City	Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska
8	Denver	Colorado, North Dakota, Utah, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming
9	San Francisco	American Samoa, California, Hawaii, Arizona, Guam, Nevada
10	Seattle	Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Washington