



**TO:** Interested Organizations  
**FROM:** Patrick Dahill, Assistant Vice President, Policy  
**DATE:** February 4, 2018  
**RE:** 2018 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds

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This document reports national benchmarks and national and regional thresholds for HEDIS<sup>®1</sup> measures and HEDIS/CAHPS<sup>®2</sup> 5.0H survey results and will be used to score health plans for accreditation year 2018.

### **B&T Format**

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This memo does not include the benchmarks and thresholds by measure. The 2018 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 performance portion of its Accreditation 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**

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NCQA added the following measures to Accreditation 2018 scoring.

- Adherence to Antipsychotic Medications for Individuals With Schizophrenia (*Medicaid*)
- Emergency Department Utilization (*commercial and Medicare*)
- Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2 (*commercial and Medicaid*)
- Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment—Initiation rate (*commercial and Medicare*)
- Non-Recommended PSA-Based Screening in Older Men (*Medicare*)
- Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease—both rates (*all product lines*)
- Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes—both rates (*all product lines*)

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<sup>1</sup>HEDIS<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

<sup>2</sup>CAHPS<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

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## Retired Measures

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NCQA retired the following measures from the HEDIS measurement set. If an organization is accredited on the 2014 standards or earlier and one of the following measures is part of the required measure list, the organization will be scored NA and the NA will not count against the maximum NA threshold.

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

NCQA retired the following measures from Accreditation 2018 scoring. Organizations accredited on the 2014 standards or earlier will be scored using the organization's submitted rate.

- Adult BMI Assessment (*Medicare product line only*)
- Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control (>9%) rate (*all product lines*)
- Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Medical Attention for Nephropathy rate (*all product lines*)

NCQA retired the following measure from Accreditation 2018 scoring. Organizations accredited on the 2014 standards or earlier will be scored NA; however, the NA will not count against the maximum NA threshold.

- Medical Assistance With Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation—Advising Smokers to Quit rate (*commercial product line only*)\*

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*)

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## Accreditation 2018 Scoring

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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 Antidepressant Medication Management
- Three rates for Comprehensive Diabetes Care
- Two rates for Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication
- Two rates for Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment
- Two rates for Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation
- Two rates for Prenatal and Postpartum Care (*Medicaid only*)
- Two rates for Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease
- Two rates for Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes
- 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.

NCQA will release the *final* benchmarks and thresholds in the 2018 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds—Mid-Year Update.

The following measures will be reviewed and updated, if necessary:

- Annual Dental Visits
- Antidepressant Medication Management
- Asthma Medication Ratio
- Breast Cancer Screening
- Colorectal Cancer Screening
- Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness
- Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication
- Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2
- Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment
- Medication Management for People With Asthma
- Osteoporosis Management in Women Who Had a Fracture
- Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain
- Potentially Harmful Drug-Disease Interactions in the Elderly

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## Special Scoring Rules

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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 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.*

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## Scoring for Marketplace Product Lines

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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.

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## Scoring for Medicaid Product Lines

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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. Regions that are not listed below do not have any applicable adjustments for that particular region.

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

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

#### HMO/POS/PPO/EPO

Adult BMI Assessment.....	add 5 percentage points
Breast Cancer Screening.....	add 3 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control.....	subtract 3 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2.....	add 2 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate.....	add 3 percentage points
Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation— Bronchodilator.....	add 3 percentage points
Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation— Systemic Corticosteroid.....	add 4 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease— Received Statin Therapy.....	add 3 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease — Station 80% Adherence.....	add 3 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes— Received Statin Therapy.....	add 3 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes — Station 80% Adherence.....	add 2 percentage points

**REGION 4: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee****HMO/POS/PPO/EPO**

Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase .....	add 3 percentage points
Antidepressant Medication Management—Continuation Phase .....	add 3 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 5 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam.....	add 9 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0% .....	add 3 percentage points
Controlling High Blood Pressure .....	add 4 percentage points
Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness .....	add 7 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Initiation .....	add 3 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1 .....	add 4 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2.....	add 3 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment—	
Engagement Rate .....	add 3 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment—	
Initiation 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
Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease —	
Station 80% Adherence .....	add 4 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes—	
Received Statin Therapy .....	add 3 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes —	
Station 80% Adherence .....	add 6 percentage points
Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain.....	add 8 percentage points
Weight Assessment and Counseling for Nutrition and Physical Activity for	
Children/Adolescents—Counseling for Nutrition .....	add 4 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/EPO**

Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 4 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Poor Control .....	subtract 4 percentage points

**REGION 6: Arkansas, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma****HMO/POS/PPO/EPO**

Adult BMI Assessment.....	add 10 percentage points
Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase .....	add 3 percentage points
Antidepressant Medication Management—Continuation Phase .....	add 4 percentage points
Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis .....	add 6 percentage points
Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection .....	add 8 percentage points
Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis .....	add 5 percentage points

Breast Cancer Screening .....	add 4 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening .....	add 4 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2 .....	add 8 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 10 .....	add 8 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 4 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Blood Pressure Control <140/90 .....	add 5 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam.....	add 10 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0% .....	add 8 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Testing .....	add 2 percentage points
Controlling High Blood Pressure.....	add 4 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 5 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2.....	add 2 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate .....	add 3 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment— Initiation Rate .....	add 2 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate .....	add 3 percentage points
Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—Systemic Corticosteroid .....	add 5 percentage points
Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Postpartum Care .....	add 10 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease— Received Statin Therapy .....	add 2 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Cardiovascular Disease — Station 80% Adherence .....	add 5 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes— Received Statin Therapy .....	add 2 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes — Station 80% Adherence .....	add 5 percentage points
Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain.....	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 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/EPO

Antidepressant Medication Management—Acute Phase .....	add 2 percentage points
Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis .....	add 5 percentage points
Appropriate Treatment for Children With Upper Respiratory Infection .....	add 6 percentage points
Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment in Adults With Acute Bronchitis .....	add 4 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening .....	add 3 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2 .....	add 10 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 10 .....	add 6 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 8 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 5 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1 .....	add 10 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 2 .....	add 3 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 9 percentage points

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

#### HMO/POS/PPO/EPO

Breast Cancer Screening .....	add 3 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening .....	add 3 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2 .....	add 4 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women .....	add 9 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam .....	add 4 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment— Initiation Rate .....	add 2 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate .....	add 4 percentage points

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

#### HMO/POS/PPO/EPO

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 6 percentage points
Asthma Medication Ratio .....	add 2 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—Eye Exam .....	add 5 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate .....	add 4 percentage points
Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment— Engagement Rate .....	add 4 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate .....	add 2 percentage points
Pharmacotherapy Management of COPD Exacerbation—Systemic Corticosteroid .....	add 4 percentage points
Prenatal and Postpartum Care—Postpartum Care .....	add 2 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes— Received Statin Therapy .....	add 2 percentage points
Statin Therapy for Patients With Diabetes — Station 80% Adherence .....	add 3 percentage points
Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD .....	add 3 percentage points



**REGION 10: Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Washington****HMO/POS/PPO/EPO**

Appropriate Testing for Children With Pharyngitis .....	add 2 percentage points
Asthma Medication Ratio .....	add 4 percentage points
Breast Cancer Screening .....	add 3 percentage points
Cervical Cancer Screening .....	add 3 percentage points
Childhood Immunization Status—Combination 2 .....	add 5 percentage points
Chlamydia Screening in Women.....	add 5 percentage points
Comprehensive Diabetes Care—HbA1c Control <8.0% .....	add 3 percentage points
Controlling High Blood Pressure.....	add 5 percentage points
Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication—Continuation .....	add 2 percentage points
Immunizations for Adolescents—Combo 1 .....	add 5 percentage points
Medication Management for People With Asthma—75% Rate .....	add 3 percentage points
Use of Spirometry Testing in the Assessment and Diagnosis of COPD .....	add 6 percentage points

## Appendix A: Plan All-Cause Readmissions (PCR) and Emergency Department Utilization (EDU) Scoring

The Plan All-Cause Readmissions and Emergency Department Utilization measures are required for Accreditation 2018. Because these measures are case-mix adjusted, modifications must be made to the traditional scoring model. The PCR measure is reported as a ratio of observed to expected (O/E) hospital readmissions, and the EDU measure is reported as observed to expected (O/E) emergency department visits.

To identify meaningful distinctions between plans, NCQA will distinguish between three levels of performance using statistical significance testing; better-than-expected performance, lower-than-expected performance and same-as-expected performance.

Before evaluating the plan's O/E thresholds as 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<sup>3</sup> denominator events (i.e., the eligible population) are scored NA. This score does not count against the maximum number of NA scores a plan can receive for accreditation scoring. To help protect against trivial (though statistically significant) differences from driving accreditation status, we will use an effect size threshold of 0.9 and 1.1. Calibrated O/Es must be significantly different from 1.0 and exceed the upper and lower thresholds.

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

PCR and EDU 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 denominator/eligible population $<150^*$	NA

**Note:** The 2018 National Average O/E Ratio for the commercial (all ages) and Medicare (for individuals 65 years and older) product lines will be included in the 2018 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds—Mid-Year Update.

<sup>3</sup>NCQA plans to evaluate this threshold further for the EDU measure. Changes will be announced in the 2018 Accreditation Benchmarks and Thresholds—Mid-Year Update.

## 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