



November 2, 2009

Dear Colleague:

NCQA is pleased to provide you with the *HEDIS[®] 2010, Volume 3: Technical Update*. With this release, NCQA freezes the technical specifications for HEDIS 2010 Volume 3.

This memo includes:

- A policy change to *HEDIS 2010, Volume 3: Technical Specifications* regarding the new *Aspirin Use and Discussion* measure
- Information about the new sample frame validation process.

We are excited about the new sample frame validation process, which adds many benefits and greatly facilitates the transfer of survey measure information among the health plan, the auditor, the survey vendor and NCQA. The new standardized tool allows measure-specific documentation at the beginning of the process, when the sample frame is generated and validated; documentation is repeated in the Survey Results Reports, joining audit information and survey results. Information can now be documented at the measure level, offering greater granularity and measure-by-measure transparency.

Please review these items and incorporate them into your implementation processes. NCQA, NCQA Certified HEDIS Survey Vendors and HEDIS Compliance Auditors will consider the items to be part of the specifications.

If you have additional questions about information included in this Update or about other measure specifications, contact us through our Policy Clarification Support (PCS) System at www.ncqa.org/pcs or by phone at 888-275-7585.

We wish everyone a successful HEDIS data collection season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Cindy Ottone'.

Cindy Ottone, MHA
Director, Policy

Enclosure

Specification Updates for Volume 3

For the new *Aspirin Use and Discussion* measure, the health plan does not assign a Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag for members in the sample frame data file; instead, the health plan must calculate the member's age as of December 31 of the measurement year.

As a result of this change, three pages in HEDIS 2010, Volume 3 require corrections.

Page 34

Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flags

The health plan ~~calculates the member's age as of December 31 of the measurement year~~ assigns a ~~Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag~~ for each member in the CAHPS 4.0H Adult Survey sample frame data file.

Data Element	Value Labels
Member age as of December 31 of the measurement year	Numeric, 2-digit variable; Valid values are 18 through 80. For members age 80 years and older, code as 80. For example, a member who is 89 years of age as of December 31 of the measurement year will be coded as 80.

Prior to results calculation, NCQA uses the member gender and member age as of December 31 of the measurement year to assign a Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag, as follows.

Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flags
1 = Female age 55 or younger as of December 31 of the measurement year
2 = Female age 56–79 as of December 31 of the measurement year
3 = Female age 80 or older as of December 31 of the measurement year
4 = Male age 45 or younger as of December 31 of the measurement year
5 = Male age 46–65 as of December 31 of the measurement year
6 = Male age 66–79 as of December 31 of the measurement year
7 = Male age 80 or older as of December 31 of the measurement year

The Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag identifies members eligible for the *Aspirin Use and Discussion* measure rates. The use of an eligibility flag protects member confidentiality (using the date of birth could result in a breach of confidentiality).

Table S-1: Standardized Layout for Sample Frame Data File (Adult Survey)

Required Data Element	Field Positions			Value Labels
	Length	Start	End	
ASP Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag	1	321	321	1 = Female age 55 or younger as of December 31 of the measurement year 2 = Female age 56-79 as of December 31 of the measurement year 3 = Female age 80 or older as of December 31 of the measurement year 4 = Male age 45 or younger as of December 31 of the measurement year 5 = Male age 46-65 as of December 31 of the measurement year 6 = Male age 66-79 as of December 31 of the measurement year 7 = Male age 80 or older as of December 31 of the measurement year 9 = Missing 0 = Member is in a product or product line for which the measure is not being reported
Member age as of December 31 of the measurement year	2	321	322	Numeric, 2-digit variable. For members age 80 years and older, code as 80. For example, a member who is 89 years of age as of December 31 of the measurement year will be coded as 80. 99 = Missing 00 = Member is in a product or product line for which the measure is not being reported

Table S-5: Data Elements for HEDIS/CAHPS Surveys

Member-Level Record
Gender-Dependent Age Band Eligibility Flag (adult only)
Member age as of December 31 of the measurement year (adult only)

HEDIS 2010 CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Process

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO HEDIS 2010

- Deleted the *Satisfaction With the Experience of Care* section of the Audit Review Table (ART) in IDSS and replaced it with the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool.
 - The CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool is completed early in the calendar year to coincide with the generation of the sample frame data file
 - Health plans identify the survey measures they will report in the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool (the scope of the sample frame validation is based on measures the health plan intends to report)
 - Auditors enter results in the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool
 - Auditors assign measure-by-measure results after validating the sample frame

CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Process

- Step 1** The health plan obtains the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool from the HEDIS Compliance Auditor (the tool might have been customized by the auditor, with additional variables needed for sample frame validation) and completes the *Health Plan* sections.
- Step 2** The health plan generates the sample frame data files according to the specifications in HEDIS Volume 3.
- Step 3** The health plan delivers the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool and the sample frame data files to the HEDIS Compliance Auditor.
- Step 4** The auditor validates the sample frame data files.
- Step 5** The auditor completes the *Auditor* sections of the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool and notifies the health plan of the validation results.
- *If the health plan accepts the results* of the sample frame validation, it notifies the auditor
 - *If the health plan does not accept the results* of the sample frame validation, the health plan and auditor repeat steps 1–5, as needed, until the plan accepts the results.
- Step 6** The auditor locks the Sample Frame Validation Tool with a password provided by NCQA and sends it to the health plan (the health plan can view the contents of the locked tool but cannot make changes).
- Step 7** The health plan forwards the locked CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool and the sample frame data files to the NCQA Certified HEDIS Survey Vendor.
- Step 8** The survey vendor unlocks the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool with the password provided by NCQA and administers the CAHPS survey according to specifications in HEDIS Volume 3.
- Step 9** The survey vendor prepares the member-level data file for submission to NCQA for calculation of HEDIS survey results and enters the sample frame validation results for each survey measure (from the auditor-completed sections of the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool) into the Header record of the CAHPS member-level data file.
- Step 10** NCQA processes the CAHPS member-level data files and assigns final measure results. The HEDIS Survey Results Report indicates whether the sample frame was validated and includes a final measure result for each survey measure.

- Step 11** The survey vendor reviews the HEDIS Survey Results Reports and marks the results “Final.”
- Step 12** NCQA runs the final processing and posts the final results for the survey vendor and health plan.
- Step 13** The health plan reviews the HEDIS Survey Results Reports.

On or before the reporting date, the health plan submits a signed *Attestation of Accuracy, Public Reporting Authorization and Data Use Agreement* to NCQA.

CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool

The NCQA CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool provides information about the CAHPS survey sample frames that the health plan produces for HEDIS reporting. It also defines scope of the sample frame validation for the HEDIS Compliance Auditor. The health plan sends the completed tool to the HEDIS Compliance Auditor prior to validation of the CAHPS sample frame.

The auditor uses the tool to determine the scope of the sample frame data file validation and to communicate validation results to the health plan and NCQA Certified HEDIS Survey Vendor.

The survey vendor uses the tool to relay the sample frame validation results for each survey measure to NCQA via the CAHPS member-level data file submission.

Completing the CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool is a required component of CAHPS data collection. All information requested in the tool is essential to the validation of the CAHPS sample frame, and the organization must answer each question accurately and completely. Keep the following in mind.

- Each organization that produces CAHPS sample frames for review by a HEDIS Compliance Auditor must complete the Sample Frame Validation Tool.
- The organization must complete a new tool, or update a previous one, every year
- The auditor may not prepare the health plan section of the tool for the organization
- A single organization that reports multiple product lines (e.g., Medicaid, commercial, Child Health Insurance Program [CHIP], or products (e.g., HMO, POS, PPO), may complete one tool, but it must provide separate responses for each product line or product, when necessary
- Provide answers only for product lines or products under review (i.e., subject to auditor validation).

The CAHPS Sample Frame Validation Tool is available on the NCQA Web site (www.ncqa.org) on the HEDIS 2010 page under the section **Volume 3: Specifications for Survey Measures**. However, the health plan should obtain the tool from the HEDIS Compliance Auditor because the auditor may customize the tool with additional variables needed for sample frame validation.