



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING AND ADVERTISING NCQA STATUS

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on earning NCQA Accreditation, Certification, Recognition, Distinction or other NCQA status! We encourage you to publicize your achievement and have developed the following Marketing and Advertising Guidelines to help you get the most out of your NCQA status. The Guidelines include how to market your achievement, appropriate language to incorporate into your marketing and advertising materials and helpful ideas to get you started.

The guidelines are designed to help NCQA customers to create advertising and marketing materials that reference NCQA status in a clear, factual and accurate manner. They are also designed to protect the integrity of NCQA's programs and allow all participants to benefit from their achievement in a fair and accurate manner.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING MATERIALS

References to the terms “advertising,” “advertising material,” or “advertising and marketing materials” in the following document encompass all external and internal communications including, but not limited to:

- All Printed Material
- TV ads
- Radio ads
- Posters
- Annual reports
- Billboards
- Press Releases
- Newsletters
- Responses to Requests for Proposals (RFPs)
- Responses to Requests for Information (RFIs)
- HEDIS[®] Report Cards
- Durable Products – e.g. mugs, t-shirts
- Letters to Employers
- Letters to Practitioners
- Letters to Providers
- Letters to Consumers
- Letters to Insurance Brokers
- Marketing & Sales brochures
- Websites or other electronic material
- Any other promotional material

REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

All marketing and advertising material that references NCQA Accreditation, Certification, Recognition, Distinction or other NCQA status must be reviewed and approved by NCQA. NCQA recommends that plans submit standard advertising language which, once approved, may be used repeatedly in advertising material. **Plans should allow NCQA a minimum of 4 business days to review submitted material.**

Please submit advertisements as follows:

- Via e-mail to marketing@ncqa.org When e-mailing ads, please:
 - *Include your organization's name in the "subject" line of the e-mail*
 - *Include your phone number in the e-mail*
 - *Include the timeframe and duration (specific start and end dates, if applicable) of your advertising/communications piece*

Links to NCQA Web site

NCQA encourages organizations that have received Accreditation, Certification, Recognition, Distinction or other NCQA status to use the NCQA web site as a resource. You may provide a link to the NCQA web site. Please email marketing@ncqa.org if you have questions.

GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING AND ADVERTISING STATUS

The following guidelines have been created to ensure that all organizations have an equal opportunity to market themselves fairly and take advantage of their individual accomplishments in an equitable and accurate manner.

- NCQA awards many of its status decisions by product line (i.e., Commercial HMO/POS, Medicare HMO/POS, Medicaid HMO/POS). Where applicable, organizations should clearly indicate the product lines earning NCQA status. If all product lines and products achieve the same level of status, the organization does not have to indicate which product lines have that status.
- Organizations **must** always advertise their most current status. Descriptions about past statuses can be used and should be accurate. If a product line's status has expired, the organization may not distribute any materials that reflect the expired status.
- Organizations may attach the NCQA seal of their most current status to their letterhead, emails and business cards.
- Organizations that reference their status should always capitalize the first letter in the status level (e.g., Excellent, Full, Commendable) and the words "Accreditation", "Certification," "Recognition," or "Distinction."
- Organizations may not use any part of their "Final Results" for marketing purposes (*with the exception of purchaser communications such as responses to RFPs as further elaborated in these Guidelines under the section entitled "Final Status Report(s)"*)
 - This includes references to overall score, including any reference to a "perfect score," "near-perfect score," or any numeric representation of Accreditation scores (e.g. 97.5%).
- Organizations may not list their final HEDIS® score from the Final Assessment Report. However, they may list individual HEDIS rates.

- Organizations may advertise that they are either awaiting the results of a survey or are scheduled for a survey.
- Organizations with a designated NCQA status may use pre-approved quotations from NCQA staff members in their advertising material.
- Status may not be referred to as a “rank” or “ranking.” Instead, organizations are encouraged to use the term “rate” or “rating.”
- Organizations are not required to advertise their status effective or expiration dates.
- Should your Accreditation/Certification status change, you are responsible for updating all promotional items, and **must** cease distribution of all materials with incorrect status. Updating of website and other distributed materials should take place within 30 days of the status change.

RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE

Any of the following statements may be used to describe your Accreditation or Certification. It may be used alone or in combination with other language, to identify or describe NCQA, the Accreditation or Certification process or status.

DESCRIPTIONS OF NCQA

Please use one of the statements below should you choose to describe NCQA. It is not mandatory that these statements be included in your marketing piece.

- NCQA is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving health care quality.
- NCQA is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to assessing and reporting on the quality of managed care plans, managed behavioral healthcare organizations, preferred provider organizations, new health plans, physician organizations, credentials verification organizations, disease management programs and other health-related programs.
- NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations and manages the evolution of HEDIS[®], the performance measurement tool used by more than 90 percent of the nation’s health plans.
- NCQA is committed to providing health care quality information through the web and the media in order to help consumers, employers and others make more informed health care choices.

- NCQA is governed by a Board of Directors that includes employers, consumer and labor representatives, health plans, quality experts, policy makers and representatives from organized medicine.
- Consumers can easily access organizations' NCQA statuses and other information on health care quality on NCQA's Web site at www.ncqa.org, or by calling NCQA Customer Support at (888) 275-7585.
- NCQA's mission is to improve the quality of health care.

DESCRIPTIONS OF HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set)

The following statements may be used in your marketing and advertising material:

- HEDIS is the measurement tool used by the nation's health plans to evaluate their performance in terms of clinical quality and customer service.
- HEDIS is a set of standardized performance measures designed to ensure that purchasers and consumers have the information they need to reliably compare the health care quality.

REGIONAL COMPARISONS

- When making regional comparisons, organizations should provide NCQA with supporting documentation to validate any claims made in the materials being submitted for review.
- Organizations may say they have the first product line and product in a particular region to earn an designation. An organization with less than Excellent or Full status may not say they are the first unless they acknowledge that there are higher levels of Accreditation.
- If an organization is the second, third, fourth, etc. in a region to earn a specific NCQA status, it may promote this status by acknowledging (for example) that they are "one of two organizations" or "one of five organizations in the region." Organizations **must** footnote actual statistic.

QUALITY COMPASS® RESULTS

For information on how to advertise Quality Compass results, please refer to the Guidelines for Marketing and Advertising Quality Compass® Results found on our Web site.

FINAL STATUS REPORT(S)

NCQA considers the following to be components of the Final Status Report:

- Final completed Survey Tool (excluding attachments)
- Accreditation status summary
- Final numeric score sheets
- HEDIS score sheets (applicable to HPA's only)
- Standards score sheet
- Data collection tool
- Workbooks

Organizations may not use standard scores, HEDIS scores, or the total score in their marketing campaigns. However, organizations may, at their discretion, release any of the following to purchasers and regulators:

- The Final Report in its entirety as defined above.
- All relevant score sheets (including the Summary Score Sheet, HEDIS Score Sheet(s), and the Standards Score Sheet).

REPORT CARDS

Organizations may advertise their Report Cards results as found on NCQA's Web site. An organization may highlight one or more reporting categories (e.g., Access and Service, Qualified Providers) in marketing materials, provided that results from all categories are included in the piece.

ACCREDITATION/CERTIFICATION STATISTICS

Organizations may use Accreditation/Certification statistics from the NCQA Health Plan Report Card (HPRC) in their promotional material provided they use these statistics in a format that is accurate and understandable by the consumer. All advertising and marketing should include the date of the Report Cards from which they were drawn. **Organizations should be aware that these statistics change every month and need to be responsible for checking this.** Some durable goods may need to be corrected with the appropriate statistic if necessary.

Organizations can obtain the Report Cards through NCQA's Web site at www.ncqa.org.

USE OF PROGRAM SEALS

Program Seals

The NCQA program seal is a recognizable symbol of health care quality. NCQA encourages all organizations that have achieved a NCQA status to display their seal(s) in marketing and advertising material. The information below will help you locate and download seals from the NCQA web site and provides instructions on the appropriate use of the seals.

- Each program has an individual and unique seal. Only organizations that have received notification from NCQA as to their status are allowed to display and use seals for marketing and advertising purposes. Please refer to your specific program guidelines for instructions on how to use program seals.
- You can access individual program seals on the NCQA web site at www.ncqa.org/marketing.aspx
- Seals are available in EPS and JPG formats.
- Seals must not be manipulated in any way, shape or form. These seals may be printed in one-color or two-color format.
- Seals should be displayed in a readable format and the overall depiction should be consistent with NCQA's graphical image.
- All marketing and advertising materials that reference NCQA or use the NCQA seals in any form **must** be reviewed and approved by NCQA. You should allow 4 business days for the review of submitted materials. Once approved, language may be used repeatedly in marketing materials. Please submit materials to marketing@ncqa.org and include your name, your organization's name or your practice's name in the subject line.
- NCQA issues seals for multiple product lines.

- NCQA has updated all program seals effective with the 2008 Accreditation cycle. All organizations, regardless of their place in the review cycle, must use the updated seals on their materials and must cease use of any old seals no later than December 31, 2009. All electronic materials and websites should be updated immediately and all new print materials or reprints should use the new seal as well.
- Organizations with all product lines and products achieving the same level of status may display the seal as it is. However, organizations **must** write the product name(s) underneath/beside the seal, or clearly indicate in the text of the ad if other product lines did not receive the same level of status.
- Organizations should be aware that NCQA Accreditation, Certification, Recognition, Distinction or other NCQA status statuses can change which may affect the statement on durable goods (e.g.: a billboard that is no longer accurate will have to be corrected). It is the organization's responsibility to maintain and update accurate marketing materials. Should your status change, you are responsible for updating all promotional items, and must cease distribution of all materials with incorrect status information. Updating of website and other distributed materials should take place within 30 days of the status change.

USE OF NCQA LOGO

The use and reproduction of NCQA's logo is strictly prohibited. Organizations who have received Accreditation, Certification, Recognition or other distinction from NCQA are prohibited from using the NCQA logo in any marketing and advertising materials including web sites, emails and other web-based applications. If you would like to provide a link to NCQA's web site, please use www.ncqa.org.

APPROVED QUOTES

The following pre-approved quotes may be used in your marketing and advertising materials. They may be used alone or in combination with other language. Quotes may not be modified or altered in any way.

Quotes will be available soon.

NCQA TRADEMARKS & REGISTERED SYMBOLS

HEDIS®

The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) is a registered trademark of NCQA. The registered trademark symbol should be applied directly after the “HEDIS.” The organization need only apply the trademark to the first reference of the term “HEDIS” within the written material. **At the bottom of the page where the registered trademark first appears there should be a footnote which states “HEDIS is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).”**

Quality Compass[®]

Quality Compass is a registered trademark of NCQA. The registered trademark symbol should be applied directly after the word “Compass.” The organization need only apply the trademark to the first reference of the term “Quality Compass” within the written material. **At the bottom of the page where the registered trademark first appears there should be a footnote which states “Quality Compass[®] is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).”**

NCQA HEDIS Compliance Audit[™]

NCQA HEDIS Compliance Audit[™] is a trademark of NCQA. The trademark symbol should be applied directly after the word “Audit.” The organization need only apply the trademark to the first reference of the term “NCQA HEDIS Compliance Audit” within the written material. At the bottom of the page where the trademark first appears there should be a footnote which states “NCQA HEDIS Compliance Audit[™] is a trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).”

CAHPS[®]

CAHPS[®] is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The registered trademark symbol should be applied directly after the word “CAHPS[®].” The organization **must** apply the trademark to every reference of the term “CAHPS” within the written material. **At the bottom of the page where the trademark first appears there should be a footnote which states “CAHPS[®] is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).”**

Physician Practice Connections[®] and Patient Centered Medical Home[™]

Physician Practice Connections[®] (PPC[®]) is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance

Patient Centered Medical Home[™] (PCMHT[™]) is a trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

The organization need only apply the trademark to the first reference of the above two programs.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

NCQA realizes that these guidelines may not address all potential marketing and advertising activities. In such instances, organizations should contact the NCQA Marketing department to discuss the proposed marketing/advertising activity and arrange for written approval consistent with the spirit of these guidelines.

COMPLIANCE

Any advertising material or other promotional effort that refers to NCQA status and violates any of the NCQA Marketing and Advertising Guidelines, or which is in any way false or misleading as determined by NCQA, may be grounds for revocation of the organization's status (es).

It is the responsibility of the organization to follow the General Marketing Guidelines as well as the product specific guidelines and conform to all applicable NCQA Marketing and Advertising Guidelines. Failure to do so may jeopardize the organization's status.

NCQA reserves the right to require an organization to withdraw advertising material from distribution immediately or to publish, at the organization's cost, a retraction and/or clarification in connection with any false or misleading statements or any violation of all applicable NCQA Marketing and Advertising Guidelines. Each organization agrees in advance to remedy such violation with the action deemed appropriate by NCQA. In addition, NCQA reserves the right to conduct an audit of an organization's NCQA-related advertising and marketing materials at any time.

Thank you for observing these guidelines, and please don't hesitate to contact us with questions at marketing@ncqa.org