



GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING AND ADVERTISING HEALTH PLAN ACCREDITATION

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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.

The Guidelines below are to be used in conjunction with NCQA's General Marketing Guidelines. Organizations that receive Health Plan Accreditation are required to follow NCQA's General Guidelines for review and approval of all marketing and advertising materials.

DESCRIPTIONS OF NCQA HEALTH PLAN ACCREDITATION PROCESS

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

- NCQA HP Accreditation is a nationally recognized evaluation that purchasers, regulators and consumers can use to assess health plans.
- NCQA HP Accreditation evaluates how well a health plan manages all parts of its delivery system -- physicians, hospitals, other providers and administrative services -- in order to continuously improve the quality of care and services provided to its members.
- NCQA HP Accreditation evaluates the quality of health care that health plans provide to their members.
- NCQA HP Accreditation is a voluntary review process.
- NCQA HP Accreditation surveys include rigorous on-site and off-site evaluations of over 60 standards and selected HEDIS measures. A team of physicians and health plan experts conducts accreditation surveys. A national oversight committee of physicians analyzes the team's findings and assigns an accreditation level based on the performance level of each plan being evaluated to NCQA's standards.
- NCQA sends a team of trained health care experts, including physicians, to conduct a rigorous on-site survey of the health plan. NCQA uses information from health plan records, consumer surveys, interviews with plan staff and performance on selected HEDIS measures.

DESCRIPTIONS OF NCQA HEALTH PLAN ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

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

- The standards are purposely set high to encourage health plans to continuously enhance their quality. No comparable evaluation exists for fee-for-service health care.
- The standards are intended to help organizations achieve the highest level of performance possible, reduce patient risk for untoward outcomes and create an environment of continuous improvement
- Health Plan Accreditation performance results are publicly reported in five categories:

Access and Service

Do health plan members have access to the care and service they need?

Qualified Providers

Does the health plan assess each doctor's qualifications and what PPO plan members say about its providers?

Staying Healthy

Does the health plan offer activities to help members maintain good health and detect illness early?

Getting Better

Does the health plan offer programs and activities for members to help them recover from an illness?

Living with Illness

Does the health plan care offer programs and activities for members with chronic conditions to help them manage their chronic illness?

- NCQA Accreditation not only involves a rigorous review of a health plan's consumer protection and quality improvement systems, but also requires health plans to submit audited data on key clinical and service measures (e.g., mammography screening rates; advising smokers to quit; consumer satisfaction).
- NCQA Accreditation provides purchasers and consumers with an unprecedented ability to evaluate the quality of different health plans along a variety of important dimensions, and to make their health plan decisions based on demonstrated value rather than simply on cost.

HEALTH PLAN ACCREDITATION LEVELS

Excellent

The National Committee for Quality Assurance has awarded its highest accreditation status of Excellent for service and clinical quality that meet or exceed NCQA's rigorous requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement. HEDIS and CAHPS results are in the highest range of national performance.

Commendable

The National Committee for Quality Assurance has awarded an accreditation status of Commendable for service and clinical quality that meet NCQA's rigorous requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement.

Accredited

The National Committee for Quality Assurance has awarded an accreditation status of Accredited for service and clinical quality that meet the basic requirements of NCQA's rigorous standards for consumer protection and quality improvement.

USE OF HEALTH PLAN ACCREDITATION SEALS

NCQA encourages organizations that have received Health Plan Accreditation to display their seals in marketing and advertising materials.

- There are three Health Plan Accreditation seals.
 - Excellent
 - Commendable
 - Accredited
- You may access the seals at www.ncqa.org/marketing.aspx.
- Seals are provided in EPS and JPG formats.
- 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 should be aware that Accreditation 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.

APPROVED QUOTES

Organizations earning Excellent or Commendable Accreditation can include one of the following quotes from Margaret E. O'Kane, President in their marketing material.

Excellent quotes:

“NCQA’s Excellent Accreditation status is reserved for the best health plans in the nation. It is only awarded to those plans that meet or exceed NCQA’s rigorous requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement and deliver excellent clinical care.”

"It is partly a health plan’s members that determine whether it earns NCQA’s Excellent Accreditation status. Any plan that does so should be proud of its accomplishment. It is a sign that the plan’s delivering great service and great care—it’s met the toughest test in managed care."

“Earning Excellent Accreditation reflects a health plan's ability to work with its members’ physicians to improve the quality of clinical care. It shows that the plan is building the kinds of partnerships that are critical to delivering great care and great service.”

Commendable quote:

“Achieving an accreditation status of Commendable from NCQA is a sign that a health plan is serious about quality. It is awarded to plans whose service and clinical quality meet or exceed NCQA’s rigorous requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement.”

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.