To:                 NCQA-Certified HEDIS CAHPS Survey Vendors
From:               Janet Holzman, Director, CAHPS Survey Vendor Certification
Date:               March 27, 2020
Re:                 COVID-19 Impact on HEDIS CAHPS Survey Fielding

Above all, NCQA prioritizes the health and safety of survey vendor staff and their subcontractors. With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand the need to amend protocol plans for commercial and Medicaid HEDIS®1CAHPS®2 data collection that are already underway. We appreciate that you have moved quickly to appropriately and responsibly adapt your operating practices.

While it is impossible to predict what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have on survey response rates and ratings of member experience, NCQA's current focus is on supporting survey vendors to amend CAHPS data collection plans with the health and safety of their staff in mind.

NCQA is working closely with states and various health plan associations to create the flexibility needed to allow quality reporting in the commercial and Medicaid markets.

We understand that this is a very dynamic situation and that policies are subject to change as circumstances dictate. We are committed to frequent communication and review of all decisions as we weather this crisis together. Thank you again for all of your hard work to address the current crisis and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the health care system can focus on addressing COVID-19 while preserving as much of the quality measurement initiative as is feasible.

Alternative HEDIS CAHPS 2020 Protocol Plans
NCQA survey vendors should submit all updated HEDIS CAHPS 2020 protocol plans to CAHPS@ncqa.org. NCQA will review plans and provide an approval determination to vendors. Survey vendors' plans should consider the following guidance:

Mail
- Survey vendors may move to a mail-only protocol if they were previously planning on a mixed mode protocol. Survey vendors may add a third mailing, as indicated in the HEDIS 2020 Volume 3: Specifications for Survey Measures, for the mail-only protocol.
- Additionally, survey vendors may move to a mail-only protocol and implement only two waves.

1 HEDIS is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance
2 CAHPS is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Telephone

- Given the potential sensitivity of health plan members during this challenging period, survey vendors are permitted to add the following language (denoted in red) to the introduction of their telephone scripts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone Interviewing Specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Intro&lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello, I’m calling on behalf of [HEALTH PLAN NAME]. We are conducting an important study to find out members’ experience with [HEALTH PLAN NAME]. The results of the study will help [HEALTH PLAN NAME] improve the care they provide and will also help consumers when they choose health care plans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At (HEALTH PLAN) your health and safety are a priority. Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, [HEALTH PLAN] continues to be committed to seeking ways to improve the services we provide to our members. For the purpose of this study, please reflect on your experience with the plan in the last (12 months/6 months).

The interview is completely confidential and voluntary and will not affect your health care or benefits in any way. This call will be recorded and may be monitored for quality and training purposes.

[Q1]

- NCQA will approve the use of fewer than the minimum of three telephone attempts. If survey vendors propose to conduct fewer than three phone attempts or find themselves unable to complete a minimum of three attempts, please notify NCQA via the CAHPS Team mailbox (CAHPS@ncqa.org). NCQA will provide guidance on how to appropriately code submission files.

- NCQA’s existing guidance that does not permit home-based telephone interviewing stands. We do not approve the use of home-based telephone interviewers as a modification to the HEDIS CAHPS protocol.

NCQA will open and support information systems normally used to submit available CAHPS data on time. **The data submission deadline will not be extended.** Data submission will open on May 6, 2020 and close 11:59 pm on May 29, 2020.