

# Advertising and Marketing Guidelines Health Plan Accreditation



## Introduction

Congratulations on earning NCQA Accreditation! 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 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 Guidelines for Advertising and Marketing ([www.ncqa.org/NCQAGuidelines](http://www.ncqa.org/NCQAGuidelines)).

## Descriptions of Health Plan Accreditation

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

- NCQA Health Plan Accreditation is a nationally recognized evaluation that purchasers, regulators and consumers can use to assess health plans.
- NCQA Health Plan 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 Health Plan Accreditation evaluates the quality of health care that health plans provide to their members.
- NCQA Health Plan Accreditation is a voluntary review process.
- NCQA Health Plan 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 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. (Please note this statement is not applicable to organizations' undergoing the Interim Evaluation Option) NCQA uses information from health plan records, consumer surveys, interviews with plan staff and performance on selected HEDIS® measures.

## Health Plan Accreditation Status

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.

## 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.

### Provisional

The National Committee for Quality Assurance has awarded an accreditation status of Provisional to organizations with programs for service and clinical quality that meet some basic requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement.

### Interim

The National Committee for Quality Assurance has awarded an accreditation status of Interim to organizations with basic structure in place to meet expectations for consumer protection and quality improvement. Organizations awarded this status will need to undergo a new review within 18 months to demonstrate they have executed those processes effectively.

## 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 is a Health Plan Accreditation seal for each level:

- o Excellent
- o Commendable
- o Accredited
- o Provisional
- o Interim



- You may access the seals at [www.ncqa.org/seals](http://www.ncqa.org/seals).
- Seals are provided in EPS and JPEG formats.
- 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.”*

---

## How to Describe Your NCQA Status in a Press Release

All of the preceding rules apply to press releases.

Organizations are welcome to create their own press releases mentioning their NCQA Health Plan Accreditation status. The press release must include a description of Health Plan Accreditation and the NCQA boiler plate:

---

*NCQA is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations. It also recognizes clinicians and practices in key areas of performance. NCQA’s Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) is the most widely used performance measurement tool in health care. NCQA’s website ([ncqa.org](http://ncqa.org)) contains information to help consumers, employers and others make more-informed health care choices. NCQA can be found online at [ncqa.org](http://ncqa.org), on Twitter [@ncqa](https://twitter.com/ncqa), on Facebook at [facebook.com/NCQA.org/](https://facebook.com/NCQA.org/) and on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/company/ncqa](https://linkedin.com/company/ncqa).*

---

Submit questions related to press releases through [My NCQA](#).

## Compliance

It is the responsibility of the organization to follow and conform to all applicable NCQA Marketing and Advertising Guidelines. The information referencing your NCQA status or product must be accurate and not misleading. Only the organization that obtained the NCQA status can advertise such status and use the corresponding seal. The organizations’ affiliates, including delegated entities, contractors and partners, are not allowed to use the NCQA status and seal. Failure to comply with these guidelines may jeopardize the organization’s NCQA status.

In addition, NCQA will conduct periodic audits of customers’ marketing and advertising materials at any time to ensure that marketing materials are true, not misleading, and that the organization’s NCQA status is represented correctly. Failure to participate in the NCQA audit or refuse to comply with NCQA’s request to address inaccuracies in information related to NCQA, NCQA status and/or product in your marketing and/or advertising materials constitutes a violation of NCQA’s advertising guidelines and may result in, at NCQA’s discretion, a revocation of an organization’s NCQA status(es).

Organizations must maintain all copies of their marketing and advertising materials referencing NCQA status(es) and/or product(s) released or used in the past six months.

NCQA reserves the right to require an organization to withdraw their advertising materials 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.

## Special Situations

NCQA realizes that these guidelines may not address all potential marketing and advertising materials. In such instances, organizations should contact the NCQA Marketing department through [My NCQA](#) to discuss the proposed marketing/advertising activity and associated marketing and/or advertising materials to achieve outcomes consistent with the spirit of these guidelines.

NCQA will respond to complaints regarding inaccurate and/or misleading advertising materials by our customers and their affiliates. Such complaints could initiate an audit of an organization's materials outside of the regular audit process.