

**MEDICARE DRUG & HEALTH PLAN CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION GROUP**

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DATE: August 26, 2011

TO: All Medicare Advantage Organizations

FROM: Danielle Moon, J.D., M.P.A., Director

RE: Posting of NCQA SNP Approval Information and Guidance on Permitted Disclosure of this Information

The purpose of this memorandum is to: (1) announce the upcoming public posting of information about the National Committee for Quality Assurance's (NCQA) approval of Special Needs Plans (SNPs) for Contract Year (CY) 2012; and (2) provide Medicare Advantage organizations (MAOs) offering SNPs with guidance on the permitted disclosure of information regarding their NCQA SNP approval to current and prospective beneficiaries.

On April 5, 2011, we released a memorandum describing the criteria that NCQA would use to effectuate the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requirement that, starting in CY 2012, all SNPs be approved by the NCQA based on standards developed by the Secretary. NCQA completed its evaluation of SNP models of care (MOCs) in late May 2011. SNPs received either a one-, two-, or three-year approval depending on their MOC scores.

**Public Reporting of CY 2012 NCQA SNP Approval Information**

The CY 2012 NCQA SNP approval information will be available on our SNP webpage by mid-September 2011. For informational purposes, we will also post the *Special Needs Plan (SNP) Approval Process Scoring Criteria for Contract Year (CY) 2012* document we released with our April 5, 2011 HPMS memorandum. This document, which includes the elements and factors that comprise the MOC evaluation process, provided guidance to MA organizations regarding the specific criteria NCQA used during the SNP approval evaluation process for CY 2012. We will notify MAOs when the NCQA SNP approval information is posted, including the specific link for its location.

**Marketing Guidance on Permitted Disclosures of Plan Information Regarding NCQA SNP Approvals**

NCQA's approval of SNP MOCs is an important first step in ensuring that SNPs have in place a structure for care management processes and systems that will enable them to provide coordinated care for special needs individuals. We will be evaluating the implementation of MOCs separately and more rigorously beginning in 2012. We believe NCQA approval of SNP

MOCs is more an indicator of compliance with CMS requirements than an endorsement by CMS or NCQA of a plan or its quality of service, and want to ensure that beneficiaries understand this distinction.

Therefore, plan sponsors that choose to disclose NCQA approval information may disclose only the following information, verbatim, on any of their marketing materials, including their plan websites, and/or press releases:

“*[Insert Plan Name]* has been approved by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) to operate as a Special Needs Plan (SNP) until *[insert last contract year of NCQA approval]*. NCQA’s approval is based on a review of *[insert Plan Name’s]* Model of Care and is an indicator of compliance with CMS requirements. NCQA’s approval is not an endorsement by CMS and/or NCQA of *[insert Plan Name]* or the quality of service provided by *[Insert Plan Name]*. *[Insert Plan Name]* will still need to be approved each year by CMS in order to operate. If you have questions regarding our approval by the NCQA, please contact us at *[insert customer service number]*.”

Plan sponsors may not disclose any information other than the language provided above, and under no circumstances may a plan sponsor discuss its numeric SNP approval score.

Alternatively, plan sponsors may choose not to disclose information about their NCQA SNP approval in any way in their marketing materials, including plan websites, or in press releases.

Please contact your Account Manager or Regional Office Marketing Reviewer if you have any questions.