

Clinician and Group Star Ratings on the Medicare.gov Compare Tool

CY 2023 Public Reporting

Overview

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is publicly reporting Calendar Year (CY) 2023 Quality Payment Program (QPP) performance information on the Medicare.gov [compare tool](#) and in the [Provider Data Catalog \(PDC\)](#). A subset of Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) quality and Promoting Interoperability measures are reported using star ratings on the profile pages of clinicians and groups on the Medicare.gov compare tool and in the PDC.

We finalized an item-level benchmark as the basis for clinician and group star ratings in the QPP policies of the CY 2016 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) Final Rule ([80 FR 71128–71129](#)). Star ratings are only publicly reported if the performance information meets the established public reporting standards and resonates with users ([§414.1395\(b\)](#)). The first star ratings were publicly reported in late 2017 for a subset of group-level Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) performance information and will continue to be publicly reported each year forward ([82 FR 53829](#)).

To download the CY 2023 Clinician and Group Star Rating Cut-Offs, visit the Downloads section of the [Care Compare: Doctors and Clinicians Initiative webpage](#).

Select one of the topics below to learn more:

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Why a Benchmark?

Benchmarks are important for ensuring that patients and caregivers accurately interpret and understand performance information. They allow patients and caregivers to best understand performance information by setting a point of comparison and providing context.

*Benchmarks help us **interpret** and **understand** performance information by setting a point of comparison.*

The ABC™ Methodology

The Achievable Benchmark of Care (ABC™) methodology is used to develop the benchmarks that anchor star ratings for clinicians. The use of the benchmark was first finalized in the QPP policies of the CY 2016 Medicare PFS Final Rule ([80 FR 71128–71129](#)). ABC™ is a well-tested, data-driven methodology. It represents quality while being realistic and achievable. It also encourages continuous quality improvement and is shown to lead to improved quality of care.^{1,2,3}

How Is Each Benchmark Calculated?

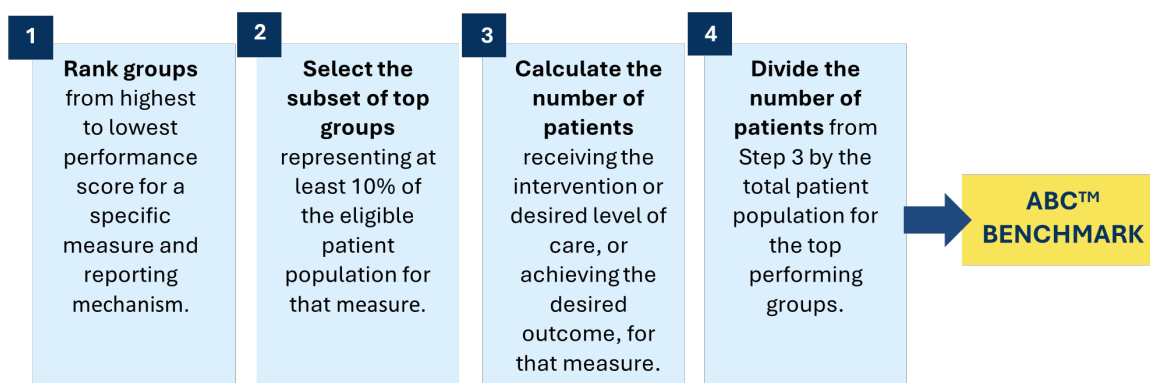
An ABC™ is established by reporting entity and collection type. ABC™ starts with the pared-mean. This is the average of the best performers on a measure for at least 10% of the patient population—not the population of clinicians or groups reporting on the measure. Figure 1 provides a step-by-step breakdown of how the benchmark is calculated.

¹ Kiefe CI, Weissman NW, Allison JJ, Farmer R, Weaver M, Williams OD. Identifying achievable benchmarks of care: Concepts and methodology. *International Journal of Quality Health Care*. 1998 Oct; 10(5):443–7.

² Kiefe CI, Allison JJ, Williams O, Person SD, Weaver MT, Weissman NW. Improving Quality Improvement Using Achievable Benchmarks for Physician Feedback: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *JAMA*. 2001; 285(22):2871–2879.

³ Wessell AM, Liszka HA, Nietert PJ, Jenkins RG, Nemeth LS, Ornstein S. Achievable benchmarks of care for primary care quality indicators in a practice-based research network. *American Journal of Medical Quality* 2008 Jan–Feb; 23(1):39–46.

Figure 1. Benchmark Calculation



We first rank-order reporters from highest to lowest performance score. Next, we include a calculation of a beta binomial model adjustment to account for low denominators. This ensures that very small sample sizes don't overly influence the benchmark but still allow all data to be included in the benchmark calculation. Then we create a subset of the reporters by selecting the best performers until we have selected enough reporters to represent at least 10% of all patients relevant for that measure.

We establish a benchmark by calculating mean performance across these top performers. This produces a benchmark that represents the best care provided to at least 10% of patients. For a benchmark to be calculated, the measures must meet our public reporting standards ([§414.1395\(b\)](#)). Each measure must prove to be statistically accurate, valid, and reliable. Also, the measure must prove to resonate with patients and caregivers through testing. If these criteria are met, we then calculate the benchmark. The benchmark itself must also meet our statistical reporting standards.

What About Star Ratings?

Star ratings are a user-friendly way to share complex information. Star ratings give patients and caregivers more context to best understand performance information. For example, on some measures, a clinician's raw score of 80% is considered very good relative to other clinicians' performances on that measure. However, without star ratings, users may not realize this and assume that 80% is just average performance. Star ratings help patients and caregivers accurately evaluate performance scores because these ratings provide a point of comparison.

CY 2023 Doctors and Clinicians Star Ratings Fact Sheet

After we determine the benchmark for a given measure, reporters that meet or exceed the benchmark are assigned 5 stars. The next step in moving to star ratings was to decide on a method for assigning 1 to 4 stars. As requested by interested parties, including specialty societies and professional groups, and encouraged by the many experts consulted, we focused on a method that:

- Avoids forcing a star-rating distribution.
- Doesn't make it hard to achieve a moderate-to-good rating.
- Reliably assigns reporters into a star rating.

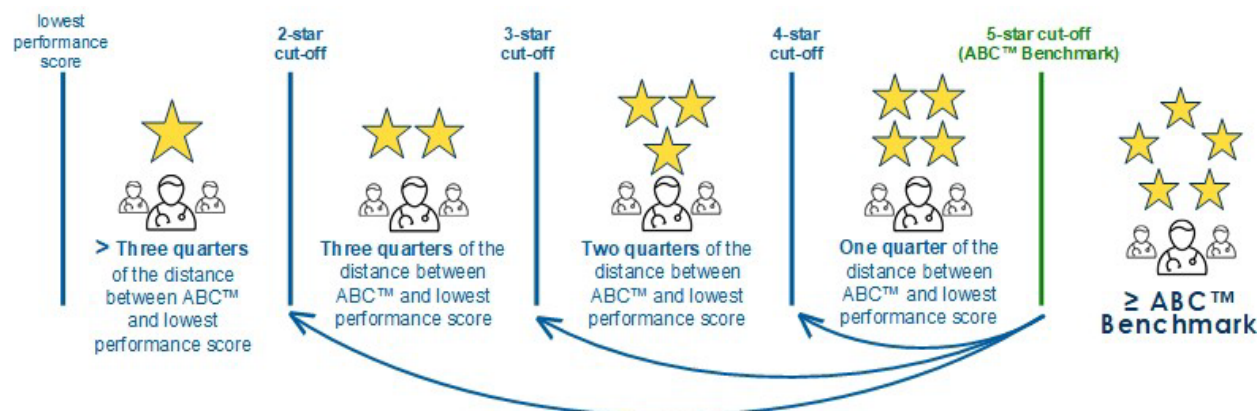
As discussed in the QPP policies in the CY 2018 Medicare PFS Final Rule ([82 FR 53827–53829](#)) and CY 2019 Medicare PFS Final Rule ([83 FR 59915](#)), we conducted extensive statistical analyses, sought expert input, and reached out to interested parties to help determine the best possible method for assigning 1 to 4 stars. This work led to a decision to use the equal ranges method to assign star ratings, starting with a subset of group-level 2016 PQRS performance scores that were publicly reported in 2017. The same approach is used to assign star ratings to a subset of QPP performance information.

Equal Ranges Method

The equal ranges method is based on the difference between the ABC™ benchmark and the lowest performance score for a given measure.⁴ The method uses that range to assign 1 to 4 stars. Reporters that meet or exceed the established ABC™ benchmark for a measure will be assigned 5 stars.

⁴ To ensure that the star rating cut-offs aren't overly influenced by a single performance rate, the minimum theoretical nonoutlier performance score, or lower bound, used to establish the star rating cut-offs is calculated by taking the 25th percentile performance rate value and subtracting 3 times the interquartile range (IQR). If this equals less than 0%, the lower bound is set to 0%.

Figure 2. Equal Ranges Method



To determine the 4-star cut-off, we subtract the lowest performance score from the ABC™ benchmark to get the range of performance scores for that measure and then divide by 4 to give us quarters. The 4-star cut-off is 1 quarter of the distance between the ABC™ benchmark and the lowest performance score. Reporters that score at or above the 4-star cut-off, but below the benchmark, will be assigned 4 stars.

We use the same idea to determine the 3-star cut-off. The 3-star cut-off is two quarters of the distance between the ABC™ benchmark and lowest performance score. Reporters that have scores at or above the 3-star cut-off, but below the 4-star cut-off, are assigned 3 stars.

We follow the same method to get the 2-star cut-off, which is 3 quarters of the distance between the ABC™ benchmark and lowest performance score. Finally, any scores that are greater than 3 quarters of the distance between the ABC™ benchmark and the lowest performance score are assigned 1-star ratings.

More Ways to Learn

To learn more about public reporting and star ratings on the profile pages of clinicians and groups on the Medicare.gov compare tool, visit the [Care Compare: Doctors and Clinicians Initiative webpage](#).

Get in Touch

If you have questions, contact the QPP Service Center by emailing QPP@cms.hhs.gov, submitting a [QPP Service Center ticket](#), or calling 1-866-288-8292 (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET).

People who are deaf or hard of hearing can call 711 to connect with a Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Communications Assistant.

To receive updates, subscribe to the QPP and Care Compare: Doctors and Clinicians Listservs.

Version History

Date	Change Description
Nov 20, 2025	Original version.