

TO: Interested Organizations and Individuals

FROM: Product, Accreditation Operations, and Accreditation Policy Teams

DATE: September 30, 2025

RE: **Announcement: Health Equity Accreditation/Plus Program Name and Status Changes**

NCQA is making changes to its Health Equity Accreditation program. Effective January 15, 2026, Health Equity Accreditation will be renamed **Health Outcomes Accreditation** and Health Equity Accreditation Plus will be renamed **Community-Focused Care Accreditation**.

Additionally, organizations will have the option to pursue **Community-Focused Care Accreditation** without first earning **Health Outcomes Accreditation**.

Standards Year 2026 (*Accreditations in Health Outcomes and Community-Focused Care*) will include expanded content and enhancements designed to help organizations sustain long-term strategies for improving outcomes for their unique member, patient and community needs. Making these changes now (program name, status name, pursuing Community-Focused Care Accreditation independently)—in advance of Standards Year 2026—helps ensure that all organizations, regardless of their next survey date, are positioned to align with the future direction of the program.

Publications and Web-Based Tools for Standards Year 2024

Organizations with surveys beginning before June 30, 2026, will be reviewed under the 2024 program standards, and will continue to use the Standards Year 2024 IRT tool throughout the survey process. Scoring modifications to select program requirements will remain in place for Standards Year 2024 surveys until June 30, 2026. The 2024 Standards Year e-pub and IRT will reflect the program names Health Equity Accreditation and Health Equity Accreditation Plus. This includes survey reports in the IRT and system-generated state reports.

New program names will be reflected in the e-pubs and web-based tools for Standards Year 2026 and beyond.

Survey Agreements

Whether an organization has a current status, a survey in progress or a scheduled survey, agreements will remain valid through current contracted dates regardless of the stated program name.

Organizations With a Current Status

NCQA will issue Health Outcomes Accreditation certificates for all customers with existing Health Equity Accreditation status, and will issue Community-Focused Care Accreditation certificates for existing Health Equity Accreditation Plus customers.

Updated certificates will be available on My NCQA and in the Final Status Documents section of IRT by January 15, 2026.

Final letters will remain valid through an organization's current expiration date regardless of the stated program name, but organizations may request a revised letter with the new program names through [My NCQA](#).

Organizations With Surveys in Progress or Scheduled Before June 30, 2026

NCQA will issue Health Outcomes Accreditation certificates for all customers that receive a status under 2024 Health Equity Accreditation standards, and will issue Community-Focused Care Accreditation certificates for organizations that receive a status under 2024 Health Equity Accreditation Plus standards. Once a status is received, certificates will be available on [My NCQA](#) and in the Final Status Documents section of IRT by January 15, 2026. Organizations that receive a status before January 15, 2026 will be issued certificates under Health Equity Accreditation/Plus and will be issued updated certificates after January 15, 2026.

Final letters are distributed once a final status is received. Organizations with surveys in progress as of January 15, 2026, or scheduled to submit before that date, will receive certificates and final letters that reflect the updated program at the completion of their survey.

Organizations With Surveys Scheduled for On or After July 1, 2026

Organizations with surveys scheduled on or after July 1, 2026, will be surveyed under the 2026 Health Outcomes Accreditation and/or Community-Focused Care Accreditation standards. The new program names will be reflected in the e-pubs and web-based tools for Standards Year 2026.

Legal Agreements

Organizations with current Accreditation in Health Equity/Plus that have completed their renewal application will be required to sign new legal agreements, and should contact their Application and Scheduling Representative for guidance.

Certificates and Final Letters

NCQA will issue Health Outcomes Accreditation and/or Community-Focused Care Accreditation certificates for customers that receive a status under the 2026 programs. Once a status is received, certificates will be available at and in the Final Status Documents section of IRT.

Final letters are distributed after a final status is received. Organizations with surveys on or after July 1, 2026, will receive final letters that reflect the updated program.

Marketing Status

The NCQA website, Report Cards, program seals and the NCQA *Advertising and Marketing Guidelines* will reflect the change on January 15, 2026.

Seals will be available for all organizations with an Accredited or Provisional status. Organizations may use the Health Equity Accreditation/Plus seals in marketing materials through their next renewal. Submit questions about marketing status through [My NCQA](#).



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For More Information

If you have questions about final status documents or 2024 Health Equity Accreditation/Plus standards, contact your **NCQA Application and Scheduling Representative**.

If you have questions about the 2026 Health Outcomes Accreditation and/or Community-Focused Care Accreditation standards, **submit them through [My NCQA](#)**.