

Health Equity Accreditation/Plus Policy Changes

September 30, 2025

EFFECTIVE FOR SURVEYS SCHEDULED BEFORE JULY 1, 2026.

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**.

Why is NCQA making these changes now?

This December, NCQA will release the standards and guidelines for Standards Year 2026, including 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—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.

When do changes go into effect?

Effective January 15, 2026, all existing Health Equity Accreditation status will be updated to **Health Outcomes Accreditation**; all existing Health Equity Accreditation Plus status will be updated to **Community-Focused Care Accreditation**.

Do organizations need to pursue Health Outcomes Accreditation to be eligible for Community-Focused Care Accreditation?

No. Effective January 15, 2026, organizations may pursue **Community-Focused Care Accreditation** without first earning **Health Outcomes Accreditation**, although NCQA recommends partnering the two programs for a more comprehensive understanding of the population and community served.

Will the name change affect existing customers' Health Equity Accreditation/Plus status?

Effective January 15, 2026, the NCQA Report Card will list organizations as **Accredited in Health Outcomes** and/or **Accredited in Community-Focused Care**.

Updated seals will be available on the NCQA website. Organizations may continue to use the Health Equity or Health Equity Plus seal in marketing materials until their next renewal.

Will the name change affect in-progress or scheduled surveys?

Organizations undergoing survey through June 30, 2026 will continue to be evaluated under the 2024 Health Equity Accreditation/Plus standards, and will continue to use the Standards Year 2024 IRT tool. Surveys completed prior to January 15, 2026 will receive an **Accredited in Health Equity/Plus** status and then will receive an updated status on January 15, 2026 that reflects **Health Outcomes Accreditation** and/or **Community-Focused Care Accreditation**.

What name will be reflected in the e-pub and IRT?

The Standards Year 2024 e-pub and IRT, effective for surveys through June 30, 2026, will reflect the program name Health Equity Accreditation/Plus. This includes survey reports in the IRT and system-generated state reports. New program names will be reflected in the publications and web-based tools for Standards Year 2026 and beyond.

Will the name change be reflected on the NCQA Report Card?

Yes. The Report Card will reflect the new names by January 15, 2026.

How will the name change impact our state's mandate for Health Equity Accreditation/Plus?

Speak with your state contact for the most current state mandate information.

How should we market our status under the updated program names?

Starting January 15, 2026, organizations may update their marketing materials to reflect updated program names or may continue to use the Health Equity or Health Equity Plus seal in marketing materials through their next renewal.

NCQA's website and the *Advertising and Marketing Guidelines* will include updated seals by January 15, 2026. All organizations with Accredited status in Health Outcomes and/or Community-Focused Care will be notified when seals are available.

Is our survey agreement with NCQA still valid?

Yes. Whether an organization has a current status, a survey in progress or a scheduled survey, agreements are valid through the current contracted dates regardless of the updated program names.

Will we receive an updated decision letter that reflects the new program names?

No. Final letters will remain valid through the current expiration date, regardless of the stated program name; however, organizations may request a revised final letter showing updated program names through My NCQA. Final letters to organizations with surveys in progress or scheduled between January 15, 2026 and beyond, will reflect updated program names.

Will we receive a new certificate that reflects the new program names?

Yes. NCQA will issue Health Outcomes Accreditation certificates for all customers that receive a status under the 2024 Health Equity Accreditation standards, and will issue Community-Focused Care Accreditation certificates for organizations that receive a status under the 2024 Health Equity Accreditation Plus standards. Certificates showing updated program names will be available on My NCQA and in the Final Status Documents section of IRT by January 15, 2026.

Does our organization need to change the name of its internal health equity program to match NCQA's new program name?

No. Organizations do not need to change the name of their internal programs to demonstrate compliance with the program standards.

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](#)**.