

## NCQA Corrections, Clarifications and Policy Changes to the 2010 MHC Standards and Guidelines

November 25, 2019

This document includes the corrections, clarifications and policy changes to the 2010 MHC standards and guidelines. NCQA has identified the appropriate page number in the printed publication and the standard and head/subhead for each update. Updates have been incorporated into the Interactive Review Tool (IRT). NCQA operational definitions for correction, clarification and policy changes are as follows:

- A **correction (CO)** is a change made to rectify an error in the standards and guidelines.
- A **clarification (CL)** is additional information that explains an existing requirement.
- A **policy change (PC)** is a modification of an existing requirement.

An organization undergoing a survey under the 2010 MHC standards and guidelines must implement corrections and policy changes within 90 calendar days of the IRT release date, unless otherwise specified. The 90-calendar-day advance notice does not apply to clarifications or FAQs because they are not changes to existing requirements.

Page	Standard/Element	Head/Subhead	Update	Type of Update	IRT Release Date
12	Policies and Procedures	Section 2: The Distinction Process—Status Descriptions and Seals	Remove the second sentence under “Denied,” which reads: NCQA does not publicly report Denied status.	CL	11/25/2019
16	Policies and Procedures	Section 2: The Distinction Process—Reporting Status to the Public	Add the following as the fourth paragraph under “NCQA’s right to release and publish”: NCQA publicly reports expired status and that the organization was previously awarded Distinction status and has chosen not to undergo a survey to renew its status or the organization has chosen to withdraw its status before expiration of its Distinction status.	PC	11/25/2019

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NA	Policies and Procedures	Acknowledgments	<p>Add the following information to the page preceding the <b>Acknowledgments</b>:</p> <p>No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of NCQA.</p> <p>© 2009 by the National Committee for Quality Assurance  1100 13th Street NW, Third Floor  Washington, DC 20005</p> <p>All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.</p> <p>NCQA Customer Support: 888-275-7585  NCQA Fax: 202-955-3599  NCQA Web Site: <a href="http://www.ncqa.org">www.ncqa.org</a>  NCQA Policy Clarification Support via Internet at: <a href="http://my.ncqa.org">http://my.ncqa.org</a>  Item #10900-311-10</p>	CO	11/20/2017
5	Overview	NCQA offers the following evaluation programs:	<p>Remove the following evaluation programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Needs Plans (SNP).</li> <li>• Medicare Advantage (MA) Deeming.</li> </ul>	CL	7/27/2015
10	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Eligibility for Multicultural Health Care Distinction—Product/product line	<p>Revise the first sentence to read:</p> <p>Products reflect the organizational structure (e.g., network), services and benefits offered by the organization, and include health management organizations (HMO), point of service (POS), preferred provider organizations (PPO) and exclusive provider organizations (EPO).</p>	CL	3/25/19
10	Policies and Procedures	Section 1—Eligibility for Multicultural Health Care Distinction	<p>Add as the second sentence under the subhead <b>Product/Product line</b>:</p> <p>Each product may have varying product lines (e.g., commercial, Medicare, Medicaid or Marketplace).</p>	PC	7/27/2015
10	Policies and Procedures	Section 1: Organization Obligations	<p>Add the following as three bullets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase a license to access and use the NCQA Web-based Interactive Survey System (ISS) Survey Tool.</li> <li>• Include all eligible individuals, including those in administrative services only (ASO) accounts, for the programs being brought forward for Distinction.</li> </ul>	CL	7/28/2014

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to continue to meet the requirements of the applicable NCQA Standards and Guidelines throughout the entire period when the Distinction status on the standards is valid.</li> </ul>		
10	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations	<p>Add the following as sub-bullets under the third bullet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— An organization that ceases to do business or no longer operates the evaluated product line/product/program before the end of its NCQA Distinction cycle will be removed from the NCQA Multicultural Health Care Report Card.</li> <li>— An organization that continues to operate the evaluated product line/product/program and elects to withdraw from distinction and not continue to meet NCQA requirements before the end of its NCQA Distinction cycle, will be reported as “Revoked” on the NCQA Multicultural Health Care Report Card.</li> </ul>	CL	7/30/2018
10	Policies and Procedures	Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process—Organization Obligations	<p>Add the following note under the last bullet:</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If NCQA conducts a Discretionary Survey, it reviews the organization against the standards in effect at the time of the Discretionary Survey.</p>	CL	11/20/2017
10	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations—Application request	<p>Revise the section to read:</p> <p>NCQA has implemented a new web-based application process. Organizations with current NCQA Distinction can apply for a Renewal Survey at <a href="http://my.ncqa.org">http://my.ncqa.org</a>. Log in, click <b>My Apps</b> and then click <b>Go To Site</b> for the distinction application tool. Review and edit the prepopulated application information and submit the application directly to NCQA.</p> <p>Contact the application and scheduling account representative (ASAR) with questions or go to <a href="http://www.ncqa.org/programs/accreditation/online-application-process">http://www.ncqa.org/programs/accreditation/online-application-process</a> for information on NCQA’s new application process.</p> <p>Organizations without current distinction or that are applying for Distinction in Multicultural Health Care for the first time can contact Customer Support at <b>888-275-7585</b> or submit a question in the <b>My Questions</b> section at <a href="http://my.ncqa.org">http://my.ncqa.org</a> to begin the prequalification and application process.</p>	CL	3/26/2018

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10	Policies and Procedures	Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process—Application request	Update the NCQA address to read: National Committee for Quality Assurance 1100 13th Street NW, Third Floor Washington, DC 20005 <b>Updated the issue on March 26, 2018.</b>	CL	11/20/2017
10	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations—Survey application	Revise the section to read: Organizations identify the products or programs for which they seek distinction. The completed application for distinction contains relevant information about an organization (e.g., its structure, products that will be surveyed). This information helps NCQA structure a survey around the operational characteristics of the organization.	CL	3/26/2018
11	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations	Add the following subhead and text under the <b>Survey application</b> section: <b>Processing criteria</b> NCQA only processes a complete application, which comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The web-based application for an NCQA Distinction in Multicultural Health Care Survey.</li><li>• A current, signed Agreement for NCQA Distinction in Multicultural Health Care Survey. <b>Note:</b> Unless state or other applicable law requires modifications, all organizations are required to sign the Agreement. Requests to change the standard Agreement due to legal conflicts must be approved by NCQA, and must be submitted with evidence of the legal conflict at least 12 months before the requested survey date.</li><li>• The application fee.</li></ul>	CL	3/26/2018
11	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations	Add the following subhead and text above the <b>Survey fee</b> section: <b>Application timeline</b> Organizations submit the complete application a <i>minimum of nine months</i> before the requested survey date. If an organization submits complete materials less than nine months before it wants to be surveyed, NCQA may not be able to accommodate the requested survey date.	CL	3/26/2018

Key = CO—Correction, CL—Clarification, PC—Policy Change

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11	Policies and Procedures—Section 1: Eligibility and the Application Process	Organization Obligations—Survey fee	Revise the section to read: All pricing policies and survey fees are specified in Exhibit A of the Agreement.	CL	3/26/2018
13	Policies and Procedures—Section 2: The Distinction Process	Determining Status	Add the following subhead and text under the Minimum requirements subhead: <b>Corrective Action</b> In certain circumstances, NCQA may require corrective action by the organization. Corrective action are steps taken to improve performance when an organization does not meet specific NCQA distinction requirements. Failure to comply timely with requested corrective action may result in a lower score or reduction or loss of distinction status.	PC	7/29/2019
14	Policies and Procedures	Section 2: The Distinction Process—Distinction Survey Types	Add the following subhead and text under the <b>Renewal Survey</b> section: <b>Expedited Survey</b> Generally, an organization with Declined Distinction status may not reapply for distinction until one year from the date of the Declined status; however, under certain circumstances, a Declined organization may apply for a new Distinction in less than a year, called an Expedited Survey. NCQA determines whether an Expedited Survey is justified, based on the licensure consequences of distinction status and other factors, as appropriate. To qualify for an Expedited Survey, the organization must first submit a written request listing the steps taken by the organization to address the substantive issues that led to a Declined Distinction. Upon receiving an organization's request, NCQA may grant a request for an Expedited Survey in six to nine months instead of in one year, in the following circumstances. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The organization demonstrates to NCQA's satisfaction that the issues identified in the original survey can be corrected within the six- to nine-month time frame as a result of the organization's activity.</li></ul> Correction of the issues would raise the organization's distinction status in a new survey.	CL	7/30/12

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17	Policies and Procedures—Section 2: The Distinction Process	Reporting Results—Releasing information	Revise the first sentence to read: NCQA makes survey results available to the public (unless the organization declines its status under the Introductory Survey option).	PC	7/29/2019
18	Policies and Procedures—Section 2: The Distinction Process	Reporting Status to the Public—NCQA's right to release and publish	Revise the third paragraph to read: NCQA publicly reports Denied Distinction status for one year (unless the organization declines its status under the Introductory Survey option) or until the status is replaced as the result of another survey. An organization that dissolves or ceases to exist is removed from public reporting.	PC	7/29/2019
18	Policies and Procedures—Section 2: The Distinction Process	Reporting Status to the Public—NCQA's right to release and publish	Add the following as the fourth paragraph: NCQA will also report when an organization is required to complete corrective actions. Failure to comply timely with requested corrective action may result in a lower score or reduction or loss of Distinction status.	PC	7/29/2019
21-22	Policies and Procedures—Section 3: The Survey Process	Findings that do not address NCQA standards	Revise the third paragraph to read: NCQA reserves the right to notify applicable regulatory agencies if aspects of the organization's operations poses an imminent threat to the health and safety of its members and/or NCQA has reason to believe that information submitted to NCQA has been falsified or the organization is required to implement corrective action. Before NCQA notifies applicable regulatory agencies, it will give the organization 24 hours to correct the condition or rebut the findings. NCQA will consider the organization's correction of the condition or rebut the findings prior to notifying a regulatory agency.	CL	7/29/2019
23	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information	Add the following subhead and text immediately before <b>Discretionary Survey: Complaint Review Process</b> NCQA accepts written complaints from patients, members or practitioners regarding accredited or certified organizations. Upon receipt of such a complaint, NCQA will: 1. Review the complaint to determine that the organization referenced is accredited or certified by NCQA. 2. Determine if the complaint is germane to the accreditation or certification held by the organization.	CL	3/25/13

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<b>Page</b>	<b>Standard/Element</b>	<b>Head/Subhead</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Type of Update</b>	<b>IRT Release Date</b>
			<p>3. Obtain a release to share the complaint with the organization if the complaint involves personal health information or a quality of care issue.</p> <p>4. Forward the complaint to the organization with a request that the organization review and respond directly to the individual filing the complaint within 30 calendar days, and copy NCQA on the response.</p> <p>5. Review the organization's response to determine whether the complaint was handled in accordance with NCQA requirements and that all issues raised in the complaint have been addressed.</p> <p>Failure to comply with NCQA's complaint review process is grounds for suspension or revocation of accreditation, certification or distinction status.</p>		
23	Policies and Procedures—Section 4: Additional Information	Reconsideration—Reconsideration procedure	<p>Add the following as the last sentence:</p> <p>The request may be mailed to NCQA Office of Program Integrity, 1100 13th Street NW, 3rd Floor, Washington DC 20005 or submitted via email to <a href="mailto:Reconsiderations@ncqa.org">Reconsiderations@ncqa.org</a>.</p>	CL	7/30/2018
24	Policies and Procedures—Section 4: Additional Information	Reconsideration—Documentation that supports Reconsideration	<p>Delete the last sentence of the note, which reads:</p> <p>The organization must provide NCQA with 12 copies of such materials.</p>	CL	7/30/2018
24	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Complaint Review Process	<p>Replace the text in numbers 1-3 with the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the complaint to determine that the organization referenced is NCQA Accredited or NCQA Certified.</li> <li>2. Determine if the complaint is germane to the organization's NCQA Distinction.</li> <li>3. Obtain an authorization for disclosure of PHI to NCQA to investigate if the complaint involves a quality of care issue or other matters involving PHI.</li> </ol>	PC	7/28/2014

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24	Policies and Procedures,	Section 4: Additional Information	<p>Add after the <b>Complaint Review Process</b> section:</p> <p><b>Reporting Hotline for Fraud and Misconduct</b></p> <p>NCQA does not tolerate submission of fraudulent, misleading or improper information by organizations as part of their survey process or for any NCQA program.</p> <p>NCQA has created a confidential and anonymous Reporting Hotline to provide a secure method for reporting perceived fraud or misconduct, including submission of falsified documents or fraudulent information to NCQA that could affect NCQA-related operations (including, but not limited to, the survey process, the HEDIS measures and determination of NCQA status and level).</p> <p><b>How to Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Toll-Free Telephone:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– English-speaking USA and Canada: <b>855-840-0070</b> (not available from Mexico).</li> <li>– Spanish-speaking North America: <b>800-216-1288</b> (from Mexico, user must dial 001-800-216-1288).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.lighthouse-services.com/ncqa">https://www.lighthouse-services.com/ncqa</a></li> <li>• <b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="mailto:reports@lighthouse-services.com">reports@lighthouse-services.com</a> (must include NCQA's name with the report).</li> <li>• <b>Fax:</b> 215-689-3885 (must include NCQA's name with the report).</li> </ul> <p><i>Updated the language under the subhead <b>Reporting Hotline for Fraud and Misconduct</b> in a November 20, 2017, Policy Update.</i></p>	PC	7/27/2015
24	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information— Reporting Hotline for Fraud and Misconduct	Replace the “English-speaking USA and Canada” toll free telephone number with <b>844-440-0077</b> .	CO	11/20/2017
25	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information— Reporting Hotline for Fraud and Misconduct	<p>Add a new section, <b>Notifying NCQA of Reportable Events</b>, after the subhead.</p> <p>See the attached <b>Policies and Procedures</b> to review the section, which includes the definition of Reportable Events, the process for notifying NCQA of Reportable Events and a description of the investigative process that NCQA may initiate following a Reportable Event.</p>	PC	11/20/2017

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25	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Discretionary Survey	<p>Revise the Discretionary Survey section to read:</p> <p>NCQA may survey an organization while its distinction status is in effect. This survey is called a <b>Discretionary Survey</b> and its purpose is to validate the appropriateness of the organization's ongoing distinction status.</p> <p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>NCQA determines the scope and content of Discretionary Surveys, which may consist of one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An offsite document review.</li> <li>• An onsite survey.</li> <li>• A teleconference.</li> </ul> <p><b>Target</b></p> <p>Discretionary Surveys address issues regarding the organization's continued performance against NCQA's standards and other considerations that may pose an imminent threat to members. <u>During a discretionary review, an organization will be reviewed under the NCQA standards in effect at the time of the discretionary review.</u></p> <p><b>Time frame</b></p> <p>The Discretionary Survey is generally conducted within 60 calendar days of notification by NCQA of its intent to conduct a Discretionary Survey. Discretionary Survey costs are borne by the organization and correspond to the complexity and scope of the Discretionary Survey and NCQA pricing policies in effect at the time of the Discretionary Survey.</p> <p><b>Change in status</b></p> <p>When NCQA notifies the organization in writing of its intent to conduct a Discretionary Survey, the organization's existing distinction status is listed with the notation "Under Review by NCQA."</p> <p>NCQA may suspend the organization's distinction status pending completion of a Discretionary Survey. Upon completion of the Discretionary Survey and after the ROC's decision, the organization's status may change. The organization has the right to Reconsideration if its distinction status changes because of the Discretionary Survey.</p>	PC	11/21/2016

## NCQA Corrections, Clarifications and Policy Changes to the 2010 MHC Standards and Guidelines

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25	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information—Discretionary Survey	Revise the first sentence under <b>Time frame</b> to read:  The Discretionary Survey is generally conducted within 60 calendar days of notification by NCQA of its intent to conduct a Discretionary Survey, but may include an unannounced survey.	PC	11/20/2017
25	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information—State and Federal Agency Regulatory Surveys	Replace the language with the following:  NCQA has been approved (or deemed) by many state and federal agencies, and conducts surveys that are accepted in lieu of state or federal surveys or accepted as meeting government requirements. These agencies recognize NCQA standards and guidelines as meeting selected regulatory requirements, and contract schedule requirements to satisfy agency solicitations and awards. NCQA may also create a separate module to cover the additional regulatory requirements not addressed by NCQA standards.  NCQA evaluates an organization's performance against requirements agreed to by the regulatory agency, contracting entity and NCQA. NCQA policies and procedures apply to the extent it deems appropriate, unless otherwise defined by the government agency and agreed to by NCQA.  For organizations in states with accreditation mandates as part of licensing or contracts, or as accepted for deeming, the organization should verify the type of survey (Initial and Renewal) allowed by the state.	PC	11/20/2017
25	Policies and Procedures—Section 4: Additional Information	Notifying NCQA of Reportable Events—Annual Attestation of Compliance With Reportable Events	Revise the second sentence in the second paragraph to read:  Submit Reportable Events via email to <a href="mailto:ReportableEvents@ncqa.org">ReportableEvents@ncqa.org</a> and annual attestations electronically to <a href="mailto:Attestations@ncqa.org">Attestations@ncqa.org</a> , by fax to 202-955-3599 or by mail to the address below:	CL	7/30/2018
26	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Suspending Status	Revise the text to read:  Grounds for recommending suspension of Distinction status pending a Discretionary Survey include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The organization has been placed in receivership or under rehabilitation and the outcome is undetermined.</li><li>• A component of the organization's system has been placed in receiver-ship or under rehabilitation.</li><li>• Facts or allegations suggesting an imminent threat to the health and safety of members or patients.</li></ul>	PC	7/28/2014

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allegations of fraud or other improprieties in the information submitted to NCQA to support Distinction.</li> <li>• State, federal or other duly authorized regulatory or judicial action restricts or limits the organization's operations.</li> </ul> <p>Because suspension of Distinction status is temporary and is designed to allow NCQA to investigate and gather information for decision making, Reconsideration is not available when status has been suspended.</p>		
26	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information—Revoking Distinction	<p>Move the section <b>Mergers and Acquisitions</b> from Section 2 to Section 4 as a new section under <b>Revoking Distinction</b>, and replace the language with the following:</p> <p>An organization with NCQA Distinction involved in a merger, acquisition, consolidation or other form of corporate reorganization, including filing for dissolution, must submit written notice of such action to NCQA within 30 calendar days following the date of the merger, acquisition, consolidation or reorganization, or earlier, if possible.</p> <p>An organization with NCQA Distinction must also notify NCQA in writing within 30 calendar days of any change in operational structure or the organization's status that affects the scope of review under NCQA's standards for Distinction in Multicultural Health Care, such as significant changes in the activities reviewed or material restructuring or consolidation of functions. Notices can be submitted electronically to <a href="mailto:NCQA-Accreditation@ncqa.org">NCQA-Accreditation@ncqa.org</a>; by fax to 202-955-3599 or by mail to the address below:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">National Committee for Quality Assurance 1100 13th Street NW, Third Floor Washington DC 20005 Attention: AVP Accreditation</p>	PC	11/20/2017
27	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Additional Information—Notifying NCQA of Reportable Events	<p>Revise the third subbullet under the first bullet to read:</p> <p>Request for corrective action where the substance of such corrective action relates to the organization's handling of important patient safety matters.</p>	CL	7/29/2019

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27	Policies and Procedures	Section 4: Privacy, Security and Confidentiality Requirements	Revise the paragraph to read:  Nothing contained in the NCQA standards is intended to conflict with the organization's responsibility to comply with HIPAA and other federal and state laws. The organization must access, use and share health information in accordance with HIPAA and other federal and state laws and only disclose the minimum amount of PHI necessary to accomplish the purposes of the NCQA Distinction Program.	CL	7/28/2014
34, 37	MHC 1, Elements A, B	Exceptions	Add the following as the last exception for factor 6:  Marketplace product lines.	CL	7/24/2017
49	MHC 4, Element A	Look-back period—For Initial Surveys	Revise the look-back period to 6 months.  For factors 4 and 6, the organization is required to complete the activity at least once during the prior year.	PC	7/30/12
49	MHC 4, Element A	Look-back period—For Initial Surveys	Revise the look-back period to read:  The organization is required to complete the activity at least once during the prior year.	PC	7/30/12
52	MHC 4, Element B	Look-back period—For Initial Surveys	Revise the look-back period to read:  The organization is required to complete the activity at least once during the prior year.	PC	7/30/12
57	MHC 5, Elements B, C	Look-back period—For Initial Surveys	Revise the look-back period to read:  The organization is required to complete the activity at least once during the prior year.	PC	7/30/12
NA	All Applicable Elements	Look-back period—For Initial Surveys	Revise the look-back period to 6 months, unless otherwise specified.	PC	7/30/12
60	MHC 5, Element C	Exceptions	Add an exception:  For Initial Surveys, factors 5 and 6 can be met by completing a plan for evaluation of interventions	CL	3/28/11
1-3	Appendix 1	Standard and Element Points for 2010	Add the following paragraph below the table throughout the Appendix:  For display purposes, all points are rounded to three decimal places. NCQA does not allow these figures to be used to determine the official score. Only ISS may be used to determine the official score.	CL	11/19/12

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2-1	Appendix 2	Appendix—Automatic credit for an NCQA accredited HP	<p>Revise the appendix title to read:</p> <p><b>Automatic credit for health plans contracting with organizations that receive distinction in MHC</b></p> <p>Revise the first paragraph to read:</p> <p>NCQA awards automatic credit for specified requirements in its Multicultural Health Care Distinction (MHC) standards when an NCQA Accredited health plan carries out required activities. The degree of automatic credit is based on the correlation between the health plan's programs assessed for each standard and reviewed for NCQA MHC Distinction.</p> <p>The following criteria must be met for automatic credit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delegate must have MHC distinction on or before the date when the Survey Tool is submitted</li> <li>• The scope of the NCQA MHC Distinction Survey must include specific requirements for which the health plan seeks automatic credit</li> </ul> <p>Under the <b>Elements eligible for automatic credit</b> subhead:</p> <p>Replace “factor 1” with “factor 11” in the first line.</p> <p>Replace “Element B: Practitioners Providing Primary Care” with “Element A: Availability of Practitioners” in the second line.</p>	CO	3/28/11
5-1	Appendix 5		Click here for the <b>New Appendix 5: Merger, Acquisition and Consolidation Policy for Multicultural Health Care Distinction</b> (Effective July 1, 2018).	PC	3/26/2018