



Early Maintenance Review Policy

Definition

An early maintenance review is a formal measure evaluation and endorsement consideration that occurs prior to the previously scheduled maintenance of endorsement date. An early maintenance review will follow the same process as a maintenance of endorsement evaluation.

Early Maintenance Triggers

An early maintenance review is triggered by a variety of ways:

- 1) Directive by the Standing Committee or the Consensus Standards Approval Committee (CSAC) to review the measure sooner than the scheduled maintenance of endorsement evaluation. The rationale for the request should include new information that could potentially impact evaluation of one or more measure evaluation criteria.
- 2) Request by a developer or third party. An early maintenance review can be requested by any party, if there is adequate, high-quality, and consistent evidence to justify the review. The request may be submitted via the Quality Positioning System (QPS) or via email at measuremaintenance@qualityforum.org.
- 3) A material change to an endorsed measure is submitted by a measure developer during an annual update. A material change is defined as any significant modification to the measure specifications that significantly affects the measure results such as:
 - a. changes to the population being measured (e.g., changes in age inclusions, changes in diagnoses or other inclusion criteria, changes in excluded populations, from one type of insured population to all-payer population);
 - b. changes to what is being measured (e.g., changes in target values like blood pressure or lipid values);
 - c. inclusion of new data source(s); or
 - d. expansion of the level or changing unit of analysis or care setting(s) (e.g., adding clinician-level to a measure that is endorsed at practice-level).

Tables 1-2 below provide a non-exhaustive list of examples for what is and is not considered a material change.

Table 1. Examples of What is Considered A Material Change

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adding a new variable or deleting an element/component of the numerator/denominator or inclusion/exclusion specifications. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change in the timeframe of the measure (e.g., all patients last year versus all patients this year and last year). |

Table 1. Examples of What is Considered A Material Change

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant change to the age groups in the measured population (e.g. measure developed for Medicare population to include 18 and 64 years old).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The addition or deletion of a diagnostic code that is not merely an update, but that represents a different or new classification/category.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A change in the risk-adjustment approach (e.g., from risk-stratification to a model-based approach) or the addition or deletion of a variable in the risk-adjustment approach (e.g., inclusion of a new SDS factor).

Table 2. Examples of What is Not Considered A Material Change

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating codes, to reflect current coding nomenclature for a specific condition, disease, procedure, test, or drug.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding a new drug to a family of drugs already specified in the measure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A change in the risk adjustment involving a modification to the value of a coefficient (i.e., the statistical model remains the same, but new data updates the relationships among the variables, so that the estimates of the coefficients change).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying or adding a clarifying detail to a numerator or denominator, inclusions or exclusions, or other specification elements that does not change the measure result.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documenting an exclusion that already existed in the measure's algorithm, even if not previously documented as an exclusion.

When submitting revisions to measure specifications during annual updates, developers must provide a response to the following questions in the release notes:

- a. Why was the change in specifications made?
- b. How does the change in specifications affect the measure results?

If a material change in the specifications is identified, data from re-testing of the measure with the new specifications is required for the early maintenance review.

Early Maintenance Review Process

1. Early Maintenance Review begins when the NQF Measure Maintenance team receives a request for early review of a measure. The Measure Maintenance team will review each request against the trigger criteria.
 - a. If a request does not meet the criteria for early maintenance review, the Measure Maintenance team will notify the requestor that the measure will not undergo early maintenance review (process stops here).
 - b. If a request meets the criteria for early review, the measure will enter the early maintenance review process (continue to step 2).
2. The Measure Maintenance team will initiate the early maintenance review process by notifying the measure steward, measure developer, and relevant project team. The Measure

- Maintenance team will work with these stakeholders to schedule the early maintenance review during an upcoming review cycle.
3. Once assigned to a measure review cycle, the measure undergoing early maintenance review will follow the consensus development process for its assigned cycle. Measures undergoing early maintenance review will be fully evaluated against all measure evaluation criteria. If a measure remains endorsed after an early maintenance review, it is subject to maintenance of endorsement in approximately three years.