Why did the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC) create the PCMH PRIME certification program?

Behavioral health conditions (mental illnesses and substance use disorders) suffer from both under-diagnosis and delayed diagnosis and treatment. This is a serious public health problem nationally and across the Commonwealth. Untreated behavioral health conditions contribute to morbidity and increase the total cost of care. The gap in care and treatment for behavioral health conditions requires action and a coordinated effort by providers and payers to ensure that patients get the care they need, before illness is severe and results in a crisis situation (e.g., avoidable ED visit or inpatient admission). Integrating behavioral health care—including appropriate screening for behavioral health conditions (and treatment, when appropriate)—is critical in the primary care setting.

What is in the PCMH PRIME certification program?

PCMH PRIME adds 13 behavioral health integration criteria to NCQA PCMH Recognition standards. A practice must be NCQA Recognized and meet 7 of the 13 behavioral health integration criteria to qualify for PCMH PRIME.

Criteria reflect capabilities primary care providers need to develop in order to identify and manage behavioral health conditions in a timely manner. The criteria include integration of, or collaboration with, behavioral health providers; comprehensive
diagnostic screenings; identification of high risk patients; referral tracking and follow-up; and provision of medication-assisted treatment for addiction.

When does the PCMH PRIME certification program begin?
The PCMH PRIME program launched on January 1, 2016.

Are there payer incentives for earning the PCMH PRIME certification?
Some payers are making incentive payments available to practices that earn PCMH PRIME status. Notably, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care (HPHC) is incorporating the PCMH PRIME behavioral health criteria into its behavioral health quality grant guidelines for 2016. HPHC is committing grant dollars to be available to its network providers to make progress in meeting the HPC’s certification criteria. Practices should speak with their payer contacts about PCMH PRIME certification incentives or other payments that may be available.

Is the PCMH PRIME program mandatory for primary care practices in Massachusetts?
No; PCMH PRIME is a voluntary program. Eligible practices (see below) are encouraged to participate, but are not required to participate.

Our practice is interested in attaining PCMH PRIME certification. How do we get started?
First, go to the HPC’s website (bit.ly/HPCPRIME) to complete a short application indicating your practice’s intent to pursue PCMH PRIME. Practices can also request HPC technical assistance with building capabilities specific to the PCMH PRIME program. Once your practice has submitted the HPC application and is ready for next steps with NCQA, you can take one of two paths:

- **New Practices (not currently NCQA Recognized):** Refer to NCQA’s PCMH Start-to-Finish flowchart, which provides the path to recognition with suggested training and next steps.
- **NCQA PCMH Recognized Practices:**
  - Go to your Recognition Program (RP) Portal and select Request an Add-On. In the pop-up window, you have the option to select an add-on for:
    - NCQA PCMH upgrade only.
    - NCQA PCMH upgrade + PCMH PRIME.
    - PCMH PRIME only.
Our practice has questions about the PCMH PRIME certification program. Who should we contact?

If your practice has additional questions about PCMH PRIME, you may:

- Speak to an NCQA representative by calling (617) 996-0081.
- Submit questions via the Program/Policy Clarification (PCS) Support system at https://my.ncqa.org.
- E-mail your questions to HPC staff at HPC-Certification@state.ma.us.
Who is eligible for PCMH PRIME?

The program is open to practices located in Massachusetts currently recognized as:

- NCQA PCMH 2011, Level 2 or 3.
- NCQA PCMH 2014, Level 1, 2 or 3.

A practice that is working toward NCQA Recognition may apply for the PCMH PRIME program and NCQA PCMH 2014 recognition concurrently.

An NCQA-Recognized practice may apply for the “NCQA PCMH upgrade only,” “NCQA PCMH Upgrade + PCMH PRIME” and “PCMH PRIME only” options.

Our practice is not located in Massachusetts, but we have behavioral health care integrated at the practice site and would like to achieve certification. Can our practice pursue the PCMH PRIME program?

No. The PCMH PRIME certification program is limited to practices located in Massachusetts.
Is there an additional fee to practices for applying for PCMH PRIME certification?

No, practices do not pay an additional fee for PCMH PRIME certification. On the application, a practice indicates that it plans to pursue the PCMH PRIME program using the Recognition Program (RP) Portal.

Practices seeking new NCQA Recognition and PCMH PRIME certification concurrently are charged only the standard NCQA PCMH Recognition application fee. Single site practices will receive a 20% discount on the standard application fee schedule and may request the Sponsor discount code from HPC. Multi-site practices will receive the standard 50% discount on the standard fee schedule. Practices/organizations may not combine discounts.

Practices seeking PCMH PRIME certification as an add-on only are not billed for the add-on.

Note: If a practice fails to achieve PCMH PRIME in two attempts, the HPC reserves the right to require the practice to cover the cost of additional attempts.
Our practice is in the Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA) initiative and would like to pursue the PCMH PRIME certification. What is the fee for our practice? Which discount code (HPC or HRSA) do we use?

Practices in the HRSA initiative should use the HRSA discount code, which they may receive from HRSA. Since practices cannot combine discount codes, the HRSA code should be utilized since it provides a 100% discount to the practice.
Why does it say “No scoring option” under the scoring section in the survey tool?

While NCQA reviews the practice’s submission for PCMH PRIME, HPC will make the final determination on PCMH PRIME scoring and will reach out to practices with their PCMH PRIME Certification decision. NCQA will continue to review and provide a recognition decision on the PCMH 2011 and 2014 Recognition program.
For more resources pertaining to the program, please visit: www.ncqa.org/prime and bit.ly/HPCPRIME.

If you have additional questions, please submit them via the Program/Policy Clarification (PCS) Support system: https://my.ncqa.org/

For more information, visit us online at www.ncqa.org or contact NCQA at (617) 996-0081.

The National Committee for Quality Assurance is a private, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. Since its founding in 1990, NCQA has been a central figure in driving improvement throughout the health care system, helping to elevate the issue of health care quality to the top of the national agenda.

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