



Physician Communication Guide

Physician Communication Guide

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Physician Communication Guide

Administrators are responsible for contacting Bridges to Excellence (BTE) eligible physicians and encouraging them to participate. Recruitment is accomplished through a combination of mailings, outreach and training. BTE's pilot market experience has shown that physician and practice recruitment is one of the most important activities to ensure BTE success in the market and multiple avenues of outreach are required for this success. This guide will share the lessons learned in engaging physicians and assist BTE Administrators in establishing a process to contact and recruit new physicians/practices into the BTE program.

Engaging the Physicians – Lessons Learned

BTE was designed using an underlying principle to make it a win-win situation for everyone and systematically remove the barriers for physicians to participate. Below is a summary of the barriers that BTE encountered engaging physicians in pilot markets and the methods employed to overcome them:

Barrier #1: The per-physician NCQA application fee required for the Provider Recognition Programs is, on average, \$450 per physician.

Solution: BTE negotiated a discounted NCQA application fee that is available to all BTE licensees. Additionally, Administrators can reimburse this fee to physicians and practices once they achieve recognition. However, physicians should pay their application fees upfront for two reasons – 1) operational simplicity and 2) it encourages them to complete the NCQA application.

Barrier #2: Physician Recognition Programs alone have not been a market force.

Solution: While the NCQA provider recognition programs are available nationally, all of the growth in the number of recognitions has been in markets where rewards are offered. Initially, BTE educated physicians and practices on the recognition programs and explained why they are so important. Ultimately, the rewards and incentives provided motivated them to become recognized.

Barrier #3: Recognition requires self-reporting & practice level resources. Small to mid-size practices may not have the extra resources to dedicate to the application process for NCQA recognition.

Solution: A grant program was established through a third party to provide extraction services and support for the NCQA recognition programs. There was tremendous response by many practices and physicians and the number of recognitions tripled within a few months.

Barrier #4: Consumers (patients) have not been engaged to the extent that they make choices based on recognized standards of distinction and quality.

Solution: Some employers actively steer patients toward recognized physicians. For example, in the Cincinnati and Louisville markets, practices that are recognized in the area are printed on wallet cards and distributed. Additionally, the Oxford Health Plan actually contacts diabetics in their area and channels them to recognized physicians.

Recruitment Process Guide

Physician Outreach Step-by-Step Guide

1. Market Outreach Mailings
2. Physician Recruitment Team
3. First Contact with a Physician or Practice
4. Follow-up Call
5. Encourage the Purchase of a Survey Tool
6. Continuous Follow-up and Support
7. Congratulatory Letter

Step 1: Market Outreach Mailings

General mailings (at market launch, after data updates, and ad hoc) are best used to set the market climate and to establish recognition of BTE within the market. To establish the program's commitment and intent, send personalized direct mailings to physicians with their reward amounts at the market launch and follow up with successive mailings to maximize their response. For example, BTE sent a customized reward letter and a self-mailer brochure at market launch, and sent a reminder postcard within 3 weeks of launch, which helped to increase interested physician responses by 20%. It is also beneficial to consult with local engaged practices, large practices, and vocal physician champions in the market about how they want to handle their own physician communications. Mass mailings and surveys may be distributed internally by some practices and will often have a better response rate than ones sent from the outside. For an example of this type of mass market mailing, please see **Appendix B: Sample Introductory Letter to Physicians**.

Step 2: Assemble a Physician Recruitment Team

BTE Administrators can set up a specific team of people in their organization that are educated on the recognition program(s) and who will contact eligible physicians in the market. Once the team is assigned, a formal recruitment strategy should be developed with the input of the regional team and

employers. The first wave of outreach should focus on the highest potential targets: physician leaders in the market likely to be interested in BTE, and physicians/practices that have the highest patient counts (and therefore the highest potential reward gains).

Step 3: First Contact with a Physician or Practice

Initially, it is best to phone a practice directly to identify the appropriate contact at the office. This contact may be a physician, office administrator or manager, or another staff member. For an example of what to discuss during this introductory conversation, please see **Appendix D: First Contact Call Script**.

After establishing a contact at the office, send a brief fax or e-mail that describes the concept of BTE and its reward programs (POL, DCL, CCL). Two files can help with this fax/e-mail - **Appendix E: Physician Initial Fax Cover Sheet** and **Appendix F: Bridges to Excellence Physician Overview**.

Step 4: Physician Follow-up Call

After sending the initial fax or e-mail, follow-up with a second phone call and review the practice's reward amounts as well as the steps toward recognition (found in **Appendix F**). Ask the practice if they are interested in pursuing recognition and participating in BTE. If it is a large practice, suggest an in-person visit to explain the program details. For suggested talking points, see **Appendix G: Follow-up Talking Points**. Interested practices should be contacted 2-3 times per month (follow-up calls) to offer assistance or to inquire about what potential barriers they are encountering.

Be sure to communicate to the practice these benefits of participation:

- ❑ **Rewards** – Physicians can receive a maximum per-physician reward across all BTE programs of \$20,000 per year and \$50,000 over the life of the initiative.
- ❑ **Recognition** – By seeking BTE reward eligibility, physicians or practices will obtain national recognition for the quality of care and may display this recognition prominently in their offices. Physicians/practices who obtain NCQA recognition in one or more of the three BTE program performance areas will be highlighted on the NCQA web site (www.ncqa.org), or on the website of another approved Physician Recognition Organization, and will also be identified to employees of the BTE participating employers.
- ❑ **Support** – NCQA also offers online training, open-call sessions, and WebEx training for each of the 3 programs (www.ncqa.org/Physician_training.htm). NCQA's Summary of PPC Standards 2006 (www.ncqa.org/ppc/PPCStandards_06.pdf) is a particularly helpful guide to practices in the midst of applying for PPC, or those who have already purchased the survey tool that provides examples of documents that would qualify under the different NCQA modules.

Step 5: Encourage the Purchase of a Survey Tool

Once the practice is ready to apply for recognition, provide them with NCQA's customer support number (888-275-7585) to order the program survey tool. Practices applying in a BTE market must mention BTE during their call to NCQA to receive a discount on the application fees. All required steps to purchase a survey tool and begin the application process are highlighted in **Appendix F: Bridges to Excellence Physician Overview**.

Step 6: Continuous Follow-up and Support

Continue to check in with the practice administrators on a regular basis to see how they are doing, if they have any questions, etc. If they do have specific questions regarding the NCQA application tool, refer them to the NCQA training schedule (www.ncqa.org/Physician_training.htm). NCQA's program leaders conduct the training sessions posted here and can answer any detailed questions about the tool and the application process.

Step 7: Congratulatory Letter

Each month, BTE's Recognition Data Exchange provides information to Administrators about which physicians have obtained recognition in each of the three performance recognition programs (DPRP, HSRP, and PPC) corresponding to the three BTE reward programs (DCL, CCL, and POL respectively). A congratulatory letter should be mailed to the recognized provider, notifying them of their earned BTE reward amount and their reimbursement amount, if applicable, as well as the timing for receipt of their reward check **Appendix A: POL Congratulatory Letter** is an example of this type of congratulatory letter.

Managing the Physician Recruitment Process

To manage your recruitment process, hold regular review meetings to share information across the recruitment team and leverage each other as resources and contacts. For example, during the pilot, BTE held monthly calls where the recruitment team was able to learn about future events being planned and how to get BTE onto their agenda.

Issues tend to be similar across a market so working together to find solutions to removing barriers is a key to successful physician recruitment. For example, the application process can be difficult for some practices and is often a barrier. To overcome this barrier, The Employer Healthcare Alliance, with a grant from Novo Nordisk, was able to offer Certified Diabetic Educators to help with the application process and perform chart extractions in Cincinnati, OH. Persistence is the key to successful physician recruitment, so keep pushing and keep your team open to new opportunities to promote BTE.

Market Intelligence and Community Networking

Another critical element of engaging physicians in the market is by engaging people who are familiar with the region and the stakeholders, and can promote the program on a community-wide basis.

- ❑ Local medical societies can be a valuable ally in certain markets. A successful working relationship can yield access to targeted physicians and specific practice information that can provide insight to physician barriers and/or motivations.
- ❑ Quality Improvement Organizations (QIO) can also provide critical linkage for physicians and practices between the tools needed to make quality improvements and the BTE rewards. The QIO's are given a list of the BTE eligible physicians and the customized reward information to distribute during their office visits. The QIO's report back weekly on whom they contacted and what possible next steps would be to engage that practice. BTE and MassPRO (Massachusetts QIO) have developed a successful collaboration to reward eligible physicians BTE rewards for successfully following MassPRO's process for completing DOQ-IT criteria.
- ❑ Physician champions can provide an invaluable perspective to other physicians and practices that are contemplating participation. Early in market implementation, BTE identifies physician champions to whom they could refer to as resources on: the practice level business case, the level of effort required to apply, and general feedback on the program.



Appendix B: Sample Introductory Letter to Physicians



«CONGR_DATE»

«TITLE» «FIRST» «MIDDLE» «LAST»
«PRACTICE»
«ADDRESS1»
«ADDRESS2»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «TITLE» «LAST»:

On behalf of Bridges to Excellence, I would like to congratulate «**PRACTICE**» for achieving three-year recognition in the Physician Practice Connections (PPC) program from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). By obtaining this recognition as part of the Physician Office Link (POL) Program, yours is one of a select number of practices to demonstrate to patients, employers, and health plans that you have implemented systematic processes that contribute to improvements in health care.

To recognize your practice's achievement, the Physician Office Link (POL) Program is providing your practice with a financial reward from employers participating in the POL Program

Your practice will be receiving a total financial reward of \$«**TOTAL**»«REIMB» based on the number of eligible patients your practice treats. To enable us to process your practice's reward check, please complete and return the enclosed *BTE Reward Confirmation Form* in the business reply envelope provided. Upon receipt of your completed form, we will mail your practice's financial reward check by «CHK_DATE».

«NEXT»

Congratulations again for your practice's achievement and thank you for your support of the Physician Office Link Program. Your practice's commitment to implementing systematic processes is important for improving patient outcomes, reducing patient healthcare costs, and improving quality of life for employees, retirees, and family members.

Sincerely,

Bridges to Excellence

Enclosures



Appendix D: First Contact Call Script

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a representative from (X) calling to make sure that your practice was aware of an employer sponsored initiative in the (Market Name) that rewards physicians and practices for demonstrating high levels of excellence in the treatment of their patients.

The initiative is Bridges to Excellence and physicians and practices are eligible for \$X per patient annually for meeting certain practice performance criteria, and additionally up to \$X per patient for cardiac and diabetes patients for high performance in cardiac and diabetes care. In the (Market Name), (List companies participating) are participating in the initiative.

Since the rewards are based on the total number of physicians that the entire practice applies with, I'd like to set up a call to get you all of the information that you need regarding Bridges to Excellence, what it means to achieve NCQA recognition status and the entire reward amount your practice is eligible for.

In the meantime can I send you some more information? Do you have an e-mail address or fax number that I can send my contact information to?

Appendix E: Physician Initial Fax Cover Sheet

Fax

To:	From:			
Fax:	Pages: (including cover)			
Phone:	Date:			
Re: Bridges to Excellence	CC:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Urgent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Please Comment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please Reply	<input type="checkbox"/> Please Recycle

Dear (Name),

As per our discussion earlier, I am sending you this informational packet on Bridges to Excellence (BTE). Please take some time this week to review the attached materials.

I will contact you in a few days to discuss this information; however, you can reach me at your convenience by phone at [phone number].

What your practice will find exciting is that, in addition to being recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), your practice can also receive rewards of [calculate reward amount and enter here] per year from Bridges to Excellence during the life of the initiative.

Thank you. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

(Name)
Physician Recruitment Representative

Appendix F: Bridges to Excellence Physician Overview

NOTE: This overview is can be printed on its own for distribution to physicians, if needed.

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Bridges To Excellence (BTE) program. In this overview, you will learn how to earn BTE rewards for achieving passing scores on one or more of the programs administered by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) or by another physician recognition organization. By obtaining passing scores on a practice performance assessment program, yours will be one of a select number of practices to demonstrate to patients, employers, and health plans that you have implemented systematic processes that contribute to improvements in health care.

To recognize your achievement, the Bridges to Excellence program will provide you with a financial reward from employers participating in your region as well as identification that yours is a “top practice” on the Bridges to Excellence web site at <http://www.bridgestoexcellence.org/>

Thank you again for your interest and thank you for your support of the Bridges to Excellence (BTE) program. Your commitment to implementing systematic office processes is important for improving patient outcomes, reducing patient healthcare costs, and improving quality of life for employees, retirees, and family members.

BTE Overview

Bridges to Excellence is a multi-state, multi-employer coalition whose mission is to reward quality across the health care system, and is a grantee of Robert Wood Johnson’s Rewarding Results grant program. BTE is a not-for-profit organization with a Board comprised of representatives from employers, providers, and health plans.

BTE is a multi-stakeholder approach to creating incentives for quality, involving employers, health plans, physicians, & patients. BTE’s mission is to improve the quality of care by recognizing and rewarding providers who demonstrate that they have implemented comprehensive solutions in the management of patients, and that they deliver safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient-centered care. BTE also encourages patients to seek evidence-based care and rewards patients with chronic diseases who take an active role in managing their own care and achieve target goals aimed at improving their health.

BTE Reward Programs

Bridges to Excellence (BTE) initiative currently is comprised of three individual programs, each of which is designed to promote and reward improvements in the quality of patient care. The BTE programs target primary care physicians, endocrinologists, and cardiologists/ neurologists who treat patients associated with the participating employers. Each eligible physician's reward amount is based on the count of eligible employer patients treated by the physician. Eligible patients are determined by BTE Administrators based on inpatient and ambulatory claims and encounter data for the members of participating employers.

Each of the three BTE programs has its own performance assessment and rewards criteria performance assessment in administered by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA); check with your local BTE Administrator for other provider recognition programs that may also be accepted in your region. Rewards are administered through Bridges to Excellence, with a maximum per-physician reward across all BTE programs of \$20,000 per year and \$50,000 over the life of the initiative.

Physician Office Link (POL)

POL is focused on promoting office practice's use of information systems to enhance the quality of patient care. Office practice sites that implement specific processes to reduce errors and increase quality can earn rewards for each patient covered by a participating employer. See table below for BTE suggested reward amounts; however, actual reward amounts may vary by region. Check with your local BTE Administrator for exact amounts.

Level of Recognition	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Physician Office Link	\$15	\$30	\$50

Diabetes Care Link (DCL)

DCL is intended to improve the quality of care for patients with diabetes. Patients who use disease management tools to self-manage their own diabetes care can earn rewards for achieving target goals that improve their health. Physicians who demonstrate they are top performers in diabetes care can earn rewards for each diabetes patient covered by a participating employer. See table below for BTE suggested reward amounts; however, actual reward amounts may vary by region. Check with your local BTE Administrator for exact amounts.

The number of reward programs in the market:	Single reward program	Multiple reward programs
Diabetes Care Link	\$100	\$80

Cardiac Care Link (CCL)

CCL is focused on improving the quality of care for patients with cardiovascular disease. Physicians who demonstrate they are top performers in cardiac care can earn rewards for each cardiac patient covered by a participating employer. See table below for BTE suggested reward amounts; however, actual reward amounts may vary by region. Check with your local BTE Administrator for exact amounts.

The number of reward programs in the market:	Single reward program		Multiple reward programs	
Cardiac Care Link (Rewards are based on performance tiers)	\$100	\$200 (high performer)	\$80	\$160 (high performer)

Eligible Recognition Programs

In addition to the financial rewards available through Bridges to Excellence, physicians who obtain NCQA recognition in one or more of the three BTE program performance areas will be highlighted on the Bridges to Excellence web site (www.bridgestoexcellence.org) and on the NCQA web site (www.ncqa.org) or on the website of another approved Physician Recognition Organization. Recognized physicians also will be identified to employees of the BTE participating employers.

Physician Practice Connections (PPC) Performance Assessment

<http://www.ncqa.org/ppc/>

Physician Practice Connections is the performance assessment program for the Bridges to Excellence rewards program, Physician Office Link (POL). Meeting PPC standards means that practices have links—to information, to patients, to other practitioners, to evidence. The links in PPC take several forms, and NCQA evaluates nine areas that measure physician office performance:

PPC 1 – Access and Communication

PPC 6 – Test Tracking

PPC 2 – Patient Tracking and Registry
Functions

PPC 7 – Referral Tracking

PPC 3 – Care Management

PPC 8 – Performance Reporting and
Improvement

PPC 4 – Self Management Support

PPC 9 – Interoperability

PPC 5 – Electronic Prescribing

Each of these areas has 3 possible levels of completion – Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced.

- 1. Basic** level completion indicates the use of evidence-based standards of care, maintenance of patient registries for the purpose of identifying and following up with at-risk patients and provision of educational resources to patients.
- 2. Intermediate** level completion indicates that practices use electronic systems to maintain patient records, provide decision support, enter orders for prescriptions and lab tests and provide patient reminders.
- 3. Advanced** level completion indicates that a practice's electronic systems are interconnected and that they are "interoperable" with other systems, that it uses nationally accepted medical code sets and it can automatically send, receive and integrate data such as lab results and medical histories from other organizations' systems.

Individual markets will determine the reward schedule that corresponds to the number of passed modules and the level at which the elements in each module are passed. (Actual reward amounts may vary by region; check with your local BTE Administrator for exact amounts).

Diabetes Physician Recognition Program (DPRP) Performance Assessment

<http://www.ncqa.org/dprp/>

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) and NCQA have developed the Diabetes Physician Recognition Program (DPRP) to assess physician performance in the care of patients with diabetes, and to recognize those physicians who demonstrate a high level of performance. To achieve DPRP Recognition and obtain 3-year recognition, physicians must submit data on outcome and process measures for a sample of their patients with diabetes.

Required Standards (Adult Patients*)	Criteria	Points
CM1A: HbA1c control >9.0% (poor control)	≤20% of patients in sample	10.0
CM1B: HbA1c control <7.0%	40% of patients in sample	5.0
CM2A: Blood pressure control <140/90 mm Hg	65% of patients in sample	10.0
CM2B: Blood pressure control <130/80 mm Hg	35% of patients in sample	5.0
CM3A: Eye exam	60% of patients in sample	10.0
CM4A: Smoking status and cessation advice or treatment	80% of patients in sample	5.0
CM5A: Complete lipid profile	85% of patients in sample	5.0
CM5B: Cholesterol control <130 mg/dl	63% of patients in sample	7.5
CM5C: Cholesterol control <100 mg/dl	36% of patients in sample	2.5
CM6A: Nephropathy assessment	80% of patients in sample	10.0
CM7A: Foot exam	80% of patients in sample	10.0
Total Points		80.0
Points Needed to Achieve Recognition		60.0
Optional Patient Survey Standards	Criteria	Points
PS1A: Self-management education	90% of patients in sample	10.0
PS2A: Medical nutrition therapy	90% of patients in sample	10.0
Self-monitoring of blood glucose: PS3A: non-insulin treated patients	50% of patients in sample	1.0
PS3B: insulin treated patients	97% of patients in sample	4.0
Patient satisfaction with: PS4A: diabetes care overall	58% of patients in sample	1.0
PS4B: diabetes questions answered	56% of patients in sample	1.0
PS4C: access during emergencies	46% of patients in sample	1.0
PS4D: explanation of lab results	50% of patients in sample	1.0
PS4E: courtesy/personal manner of provider	77% of patients in sample	1.0
Total Points (including Required Standards)		110.0
Points Needed to Achieve Recognition		80.0

*Note: Separate standards also exist for pediatric patients

Heart/Stroke Recognition Program (HSRP) Performance Assessment

<http://www.ncqa.org/hsrp/>

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association (AHA/ASA) and NCQA, have developed the Heart/Stroke Recognition Program (HSRP) to assess physician performance in the care of patients with cardiovascular disease or who have had a stroke, and to recognize those physicians who demonstrate a high level of performance. To achieve HSRP Recognition and obtain 3-year recognition, physicians must submit data on outcome and process measures for a sample of their cardiovascular/stroke patients.

Measures	Criteria	Points
Blood pressure control (<140/90 mm Hg)	75% of patients in sample	10
	BP Result Credit Toward Numerator:	
	< 140/90 mm Hg	1
	< 145/90 or <140/95 mm Hg	0.75
	< 145/95 mm Hg	0.5
	<21%145/95 mm Hg	0
Complete lipid profile	80% of patients in sample	10
Cholesterol control (<100 mg/dL)	50% of patients in sample	10
Use of aspirin or another antithrombotic	80% of patients in sample	10
Smoking status and cessation advice or treatment	80% of patients in sample	10
Total Points		50
Points Needed to Achieve Recognition		40

More Information

If you would like more information about any of the recognition programs offered by NCQA, please visit their website on physician programs at <http://www.ncqa.org/PhysicianQualityReports.htm> or (888) 275-7585.

NCQA has developed a series of open call sessions and online training programs for each of the Physician Recognition Programs to help you learn more about the application and submission process. Each type of program is offered multiple times to accommodate as many interested physicians and practice administrators as possible. All training sessions are program-specific and have been scheduled as Eastern Daylight Time or Eastern Standard Time (based on time of year) and can be found here: http://www.ncqa.org/Physician_training.htm

Obtaining Recognition and Receiving Rewards

Follow the steps listed below to receive Bridges to Excellence rewards in each program through **NCQA**, as of March '06 Other BTE-approved recognitions program may exist in your market. Check with your local BTE Administrator for any assistance tools &/or resources they might offer to physicians or practices submitting recognition applications.

Physician Office Link (POL) Rewards

1. Visit www.ncqa.org/pol or call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 to request an application packet.
2. Register on BTE's Physician Practice Portal (PPP) at <http://bte.healthgrades.com/sites/practice/> For assistance with this registration process, please follow the steps outlined in **Appendix D: PPP User Training Manual**. It is important to note that practices that are not registered on the portal will not receive POL rewards. After completing the PPP registration process, call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 and provide them with the BTE ID number issued by the portal.
3. Purchase a user license for the PCC through NCQA's Interactive Survey System (ISS). The ISS allows your practice to review the standards and conduct a self-scoring readiness evaluation.
4. Decide which PCC modules to pursue when you complete the readiness evaluation. For information about the PPC Practice Recognition Program, please visit www.ncqa.org/ppc/
5. Submit to NCQA the following:
 - Completed PPC application
 - NCQA Application fee (the fee table is included in the application agreement)
 - Signed PCC agreement
 - Signed Business Associate addendum
 - Completed Survey Tool with attached supporting documentation that validates responses.

Diabetes Care Link (DCL) Rewards

1. Visit www.ncqa.org/dprp or call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 to request an DPRP application packet.
2. Register on BTE's Physician Practice Portal (PPP) at <http://bte.healthgrades.com/sites/practice/> For assistance with this registration process, please follow the steps outlined in **Appendix D: PPP User Training Manual**. It is important to note that practices that are not registered on the portal will not receive POL rewards. After completing the PPP registration process, call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 and provide them with the BTE ID number issued by the portal.
3. Complete and submit NCQA's Practice Background Information Worksheet. Based on the list of physicians provided with the worksheet, identify your practice's physicians (who must spend at least 51% of their time at that practice location).
4. Purchase a user license for the DPRP through NCQA's Interactive Survey System (ISS). The ISS allows your practice to review the standards and conduct a self-scoring readiness evaluation.
5. Decide whether to apply for 1-year certification or 3-year recognition. For more information about the DPRP Physician Recognition Program, please visit www.ncqa.org/dprp/
6. Submit to NCQA the following:
 - Completed DPRP application
 - NCQA Application fee (the fee table is included in the application agreement)
 - Signed DPRP agreement
 - Signed Business Associate addendum
 - Completed Survey Tool with attached DPRP Medical Record abstraction worksheet.
 - Any remaining fee due for an application for a group of physicians.

Cardiac Care Link (CCL) Rewards

1. Go to <http://www.ncqa.org/hsrp/> or call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 to request an HSRP application packet.
2. Register on BTE's Physician Practice Portal (PPP) at <http://bte.healthgrades.com/sites/practice/> For assistance with this registration process, please follow the steps outlined in **Appendix D: PPP User Training Manual**. It is important to note that practices that are not registered on the portal will not receive POL rewards. After completing the PPP registration process, call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 and provide them with the BTE ID number issued by the portal.
3. Complete and submit NCQA's Practice Background Information Worksheet. Based on the list of physicians provided with the worksheet, identify your practice's physicians (who must spend at least 51% of their time at that practice location).
4. Purchase a user license for the DPRP through NCQA's Interactive Survey System (ISS). The ISS allows your practice to review the standards and conduct a self-scoring readiness evaluation.
5. Decide whether to apply for 1-year certification or 3-year recognition. For more information about the HSRP Physician Recognition Program, please visit www.ncqa.org/hsrp/
6. Submit to NCQA the following:
 - Completed HSRP application
 - NCQA Application fee (the fee table is included in the application agreement)
 - Signed HSRP agreement
 - Signed Business Associate addendum
 - Completed Survey Tool with attached HSRP Medical Record abstraction worksheet
 - Any remaining fee due for an application for a group of physicians.

Appendix G: Follow-up Talking Points

General BTE/Pay for performance talking points

- ❑ Failure to consistently apply principles of evidence-based medicine manifests most clearly in the widespread and well-documented variation in rates of care between the best performers among health plans that collect and report data.
- ❑ Despite evidence of promising gains in certain sectors of the health care system, NCQA documents evidence of widespread, unexplained variation in quality that results in thousands of unnecessary deaths, avoidable hospitalizations and illnesses and billions of dollars in lost productivity, hobbling an economy already encumbered by the ever-growing costs of health insurance.
- ❑ Apart from the health plan quality information that NCQA has published for the past decade, it is still exceedingly difficult for consumers to find comparative information about their health options and providers. This accountability vacuum must be filled if forward movement on quality is to continue
- ❑ Better information on physician and hospital quality and performance data from PPOs and other health plans must become more widely available if consumers are expected to make informed choices and seek out quality care in the new medical marketplace
- ❑ Research increasingly demonstrates that many opportunities to deliver needed care are missed simply because doctor's offices and health plans lack the ability to identify and track patients who need it. Patient registries that monitor a practice's chronically ill patients are a fairly simple method of enhancing quality of care and preventing serious downstream complications from disease
- ❑ NCQA's physician recognition program, PPC, helps consumers identify practices that have such systems in place.
- ❑ Several major private and public quality efforts are using PPC to recognize and reward these physician offices that have or establish such systems.

PPC/POL Specific Talking Points

Meeting NCQA's PPC standards means that practices have links - to information, to patients, to other practitioners, to evidence. BTE's reward programs encourage more practices to develop those links.

Based on research supporting the relationship of systems to quality care, Bridges to Excellence rewards those practices that use such systematic processes are better able to:

- ❑ Monitor their patients' medical histories
- ❑ Work with patients over time, not just during office visits
- ❑ Follow up with patients and with other providers
- ❑ Manage populations, not just individuals, using evidence-based care
- ❑ Encourage better health habits and self-management of medical concerns
- ❑ Avoid medical errors

DCL Specific Talking points

As a practice that treats diabetes patients, you work hard to consistently deliver the highest quality care to your patients. The National Committee for Quality Assurance have developed the Diabetes Provider Recognition Program (DPRP), which recognizes physicians that deliver excellent preventive and high quality diabetes care to their patients. The DPRP program measures blood pressure controls, lipid profiles, cholesterol control, monitoring the smoking status of patients, and having some sort of measures for cessation advice or treatment.

The program features:

- Use of national measures based on widely accepted guidelines
- Easy to use Web-based survey tool that facilitates the review and application process
- Ability to evaluate readiness prior to submission – get immediate feedback for quality improvement efforts in your practice
- Open to individual physicians and physician groups.

Why pursue DPRP recognition?

- Highlight your personal achievements in delivering high quality care
- Inform employers and health plans who are beginning to reward quality care based on this program. Participating employers encourage their employees to go to recognized physicians, and highlight them on our website. Additionally, the health plans identify recognized practices and physicians in their provider directory.
- Attracts patients looking for reliable information to direct them to physicians who provide high quality care
- Assess your performance, as part of your own practice's pursuit of quality measures, against national criteria
- Rewards through BTE for participating

CCL Specific Talking points

As a cardiology practice that treats cardiovascular diseases and stroke-related disorders, you work hard to consistently deliver the highest quality care to your patients. The American Heart Association and the National Committee for Quality Assurance have developed the Heart-Stroke Recognition Program (HSRP), which recognizes physicians that deliver excellent preventive and high quality cardiovascular and stroke care to their patients. The HSRP program measures blood pressure controls, lipid profiles, cholesterol control, whether or not your patients are on aspirin or another antithrombotic, monitoring the smoking status of patients, and having some sort of measures for cessation advice or treatment.

The program features:

- Use of national measures based on widely accepted guidelines
- Easy to use Web-based survey tool that facilitates the review and application process
- Ability to evaluate readiness prior to submission – get immediate feedback for quality improvement efforts in your practice
- Open to individual physicians and physician groups.

Why pursue HSRP recognition?

- Highlight your personal achievements in delivering high quality care
- Inform employers and health plans who are beginning to reward quality care based on this program. Participating employers encourage their employees to go to recognized physicians, and highlight them on our website. Additionally, the health plans identify recognized practices and physicians in their provider directory.
- Attracts patients looking for reliable information to direct them to physicians who provide high quality care
- Assess your performance, as part of your own practice's pursuit of quality measures, against national criteria
- Rewards through BTE for participating



Appendix A: Sample Introductory Letter to Physicians

May 8, 2006

Dr. «FIRST_MIDDLE» «LAST»
«ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»



Dear Dr. «LAST»:

Bridges to Excellence is a coalition of several leading national purchasers who are interested in comprehensive health care solutions and improved care for patients with chronic conditions. Through Bridges to Excellence, physicians and office practices which demonstrate high levels of performance in the use of clinical information systems and chronic care management are eligible for incentive bonuses paid by participating purchasers.

The Bridges to Excellence initiative is currently in its second year of a three-year pilot in the Massachusetts market. If your practice treats patients who are covered by one of the participating purchasers and plans, your practice may be eligible for rewards totaling up to \$20,000 per physician per year and up to \$50,000 per physician over the life of the Bridges to Excellence initiative.

The Bridges to Excellence programs available in the Massachusetts market are:

- Diabetes Care Link (DCL): Rewards physicians up to \$80 per eligible diabetes patient for demonstrating good outcomes in diabetes care.
- Cardiac Care Link (CCL): Rewards physicians up to \$160 per eligible cardiac patient for demonstrating good outcomes in cardiac care.
- Physician Office Link (POL): Rewards office practices up to \$50 per eligible patient for the use of systematic information to enhance the quality of patient care.

To obtain the rewards offered under each Bridges to Excellence program, eligible physicians must demonstrate quality care by obtaining recognition in the Diabetes Physician Recognition Program (for DCL rewards), the Heart/Stroke Recognition Program (for CCL rewards), or the Physician Practice Connections program (for POL rewards) administered by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

Follow these steps to receive your rewards:

1. Contact NCQA at 1-888-275-7585 to request an application packet for the applicable performance assessment program.
2. Register on BTE's Physician Practice Portal (PPP) at <http://bte.healthgrades.com/sites/practice/> For assistance with this registration process, please follow the steps outlined in Appendix B: PPP User Training Manual. It is important to note that practices that are not registered on the portal will not receive POL rewards. After completing the PPP registration process, call NCQA Customer Support at 1-888-275-7585 and provide them with the BTE ID number issued by the portal.
3. Contact NCQA to purchase a license for the Survey Tool and assess your performance. Physicians who submit a new NCQA application and pass NCQA's performance criteria may be eligible for reimbursement of fees paid to NCQA.
4. Submit your complete Survey Tool and application to NCQA. NCQA will return your results within 30 days.
5. Receive reward check from Bridges to Excellence for achieving performance recognition. You do not need to apply separately to Bridges to Excellence for rewards.

For more information regarding Bridges to Excellence, the POL reward program and applying for PPC recognition, please contact us at:

<http://www.bridgestoexcellence.org/>

1-800-224-7161

bridgestoexcellence@thomson.com

<http://www.ncqa.org/ppc/>

1-888-275-7585

We highly encourage you to obtain recognition with NCQA and to receive the rewards offered under the POL program.

Sincerely,