

# Top 10 Lessons Learned for NCQA Accreditation

## 1. Assign a Dedicated Lead for Accreditation

Designate one person to oversee the NCQA accreditation process. This individual should:

- Act as the main contact with NCQA.
- Serve as internal project manager, coordinating communications and deadlines with all staff involved.
- Ensure timely follow-up and task completion across departments.

## 2. Understand the Standards - and Their Interpretation

Read all standards thoroughly.

- Keep in mind the standards were originally written for Health Plans and later adapted for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).
- Do not assume mutual understanding: Clarify both your intent and your interpretation, as language may not easily translate between your team and the surveyor.

## 3. Prepare for Initial NCQA Contact Meeting

Schedule a virtual meeting with your NCQA contact early in the process.

- Multiple team members can attend.
- Review all standards beforehand and prepare specific questions.
- Follow-up meetings are often needed, so use the first meeting to open an ongoing dialogue.

## 4. Use the NCQA Portal Strategically

Your lead/contact person should submit all questions to the NCQA portal.

- This person should become the in-house expert on standards.
- If responses feel generic or unclear, ask again:  
"I've reviewed that in the Standards and Guidelines, but I need help applying it to our setting. Can you clarify..."

## 5. Submit the Correct Types of Evidence

NCQA will only accept specific types of documentation for each requirement:

- Documented Process
- Report
- Material

Check the Standard and Guidelines to ensure the right type of evidence is provided.

## 6. Less is More - Make Evidence Easy to Review

Surveyors want clear, concise documentation. Tips:

- Use NCQA's terminology whenever possible.
- Add bookmarks in PDFs or comment boxes and highlights in Word documents.

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- Label documents with the specific Standard, Element, and Factor.
- Use color-coded text in procedures to highlight relevant elements/factors.

### 7. Measurements for LTSS 5 (Elements B, C, D)

- Track and analyze at least one measure of effectiveness.
- Keep your data collection simple, meaningful, and repeatable.
- Benchmarking can be organization-defined or set by state purchasers.

### 8. LTSS 6, Element E - Staff Training (9 Factors)

- Select training materials that are easy to implement.

Example tools:

- Health Belief Model (Factor 4)
- Teach-Back Method (Factor 9)

Both tools are available online as free one-pagers.

### 9. Understand and Meet \*Critical Factors\*

- Some Elements contain critical factors.
- If a critical factor is not met, the best score possible is "Partially Met."
- Critical factors are marked in the Standards and the IRT.

### 10. Not All Factors Must Be Met to Receive "Met"

- Some standards allow partial completion.  
Example: LTSS D has 12 factors. A score of "Met" may be granted if 6 of 12 are met.
- However, if Factor 7 (a critical factor) is not one of them, full score is not possible.

Deborah Danner-Gulley, RN, BSN, CMC  
Director of CM Services  
Area Agency on Aging/District 7  
800-582-7277 extension 21102  
dgulley@aaa7.org



Beth Fryman, LSW  
VP of Medicaid Services  
Area Agency on Aging, District 5  
800-522-5680 extension 1108  
bfryman@aaa5ohio.org

