



# NQF's Contributions to the Nation's Health

## DEFINING QUALITY

NQF-endorsed measures improve patient health, enhance quality, and help to manage costs. Each year, NQF reviews more than 130 measures for endorsement, using a rigorous, evidence-based process. Each measure is evaluated by a committee of national experts and diverse stakeholders against five essential criteria:

- **Is the information that the measure captures important to report?**
- **Is the measure scientifically valid and replicable?**
- **Is the measure feasible in real-world healthcare?**
- **Will it be useful and used by providers and patients?**
- **Will the measure add value to existing measurement and improvement efforts?**

The impact of NQF-endorsed measures on the healthcare marketplace is significant. Today, about 300 NQF-endorsed measures are used in more than 20 federal public reporting and pay-for-performance programs as well as in private sector and state programs. NQF maintains or improves its endorsed measures so they reflect the very latest scientific and clinical knowledge. With 11 expert standing committees empaneled—and another 10 planned—in specific clinical and health-related areas, NQF responds in real time to newly published research to ensure its endorsed measures are accurate, evidence-based, meaningful, and up to date.

## meas•ure *verb*

To estimate the relative amount, value, etc., of, by comparison with some standard.

## meas•ure *noun*

The extent, dimensions, quantity, etc., of something, ascertained especially by comparison with a standard.

Healthcare performance measurement tells you whether the healthcare system does what it should.



# NQF's Contributions to the Nation's Health

## MAPPING NATIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

NQF is the steward of key partnerships that drive agreement across the public and private sectors about how to improve healthcare. For example, since 2011 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has called upon NQF annually to recommend best-in-class measures for its 20-plus federal public reporting and pay-for-performance programs.

More specifically, NQF's Measure Applications Partnership (MAP) brings together 60 healthcare leaders and experts from the private sector, as well as federal representatives from 9 different agencies, for an intensive annual review of measures being considered by HHS. MAP then recommends to HHS the use of specific measures in specific Medicare and Medicaid programs. HHS takes these recommendations under consideration as it develops and updates the regulations that govern these programs, which together provide health coverage for more than 120 million Americans.

MAP's work fosters use of a more uniform set of measures across federal programs and across the public and private sectors. This uniformity helps providers better understand what they should focus on; reduces wasteful data collection for hospitals, physicians, and nurses; and helps to curb the proliferation of "look alike" measures that create confusion for patients and payers.

## Technical Advisor to the U.S. Congress, the Administration, and Federal Agencies

NQF is a national resource for quality measurement and improvement expertise. NQF's members, leadership, and staff have in-depth technical knowledge of performance measurement, public health, and healthcare delivery. Congressional and federal agencies call upon NQF to serve as a technical resource on a broad range of healthcare issues, including guidance on physician payment reform, post-acute care reform, and improvements in care for Americans who are covered by both Medicare and Medicaid, one of the nation's most vulnerable populations.

## National Convener of Stature

NQF convenes representatives from the private and public sectors to share perspectives and develop common goals and strategies that result in national standards of care. The only consensus-based healthcare organization in the nation as defined by federal Office of Management and Budget, NQF is uniquely qualified to bring together stakeholders who represent all facets of an issue. NQF's expertise in measurement science and its proven consensus-building strategies ensure that these diverse stakeholders succeed in their assigned task, whether it be identifying and prioritizing gaps in healthcare, endorsing quality measures, recommending patient safety standards, or developing approaches to address some of the nation's most challenging healthcare issues.



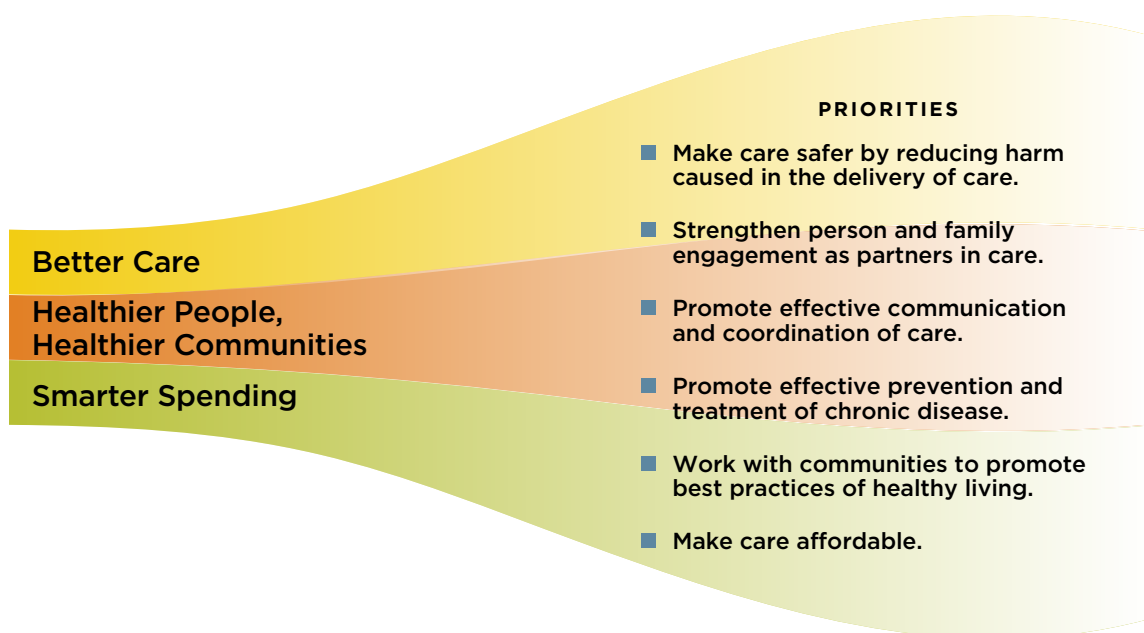
# NQF's Contributions to the Nation's Health

## National Quality Strategy

NQF provided the blueprint for the nation's first National Quality Strategy (NQS). This overarching framework guides and aligns public and private local, state, and national efforts to improve the quality of healthcare in the United States and focuses on three priority aims: better care, smarter spending, and healthy communities. NQF's contributions to the NQS are multiple and varied. For example:

### **BETTER CARE.**

Valid, reliable performance measures are essential to achieving quality in healthcare. Over the past 15 years, NQF has identified and endorsed best-in-class clinical measures across all care settings. With this solid foundation, NQF is moving to tap more comprehensively the rich information resource of patient-reported outcomes—outcomes of care reported directly by patients, without interpretation by clinicians. NQF's Patient-Reported Outcomes in Performance Measurement report details the specific steps on how to develop evidence-based, valid, and reliable patient-reported outcomes performance measures that can help healthcare providers continually improve the care they give by hearing feedback directly from patients. The NQF Measure Incubator is now testing this approach through an effort with PatientsLikeMe funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.





# NQF's Contributions to the Nation's Health

## **AFFORDABLE CARE.**

While significant advances have been made in measuring clinical care, measuring costs and other metrics related to affordability have been difficult. A fundamental challenge is defining what affordability means, particularly for patients. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NQF is working to better understand how patients use cost data. This better understanding will help provide a pathway toward more effective, patient-oriented measures that address affordability. This initiative is the latest installment of NQF's larger body of work to develop resource use measures and to pair cost and quality measures effectively. Healthcare providers in Minnesota are demonstrating the impact of this work. This alliance used the NQF-endorsed total cost of care measure to demonstrate improved care for patients with bronchitis, a reduction in preterm elective deliveries, fewer patients being unnecessarily readmitted to the hospital, and increased prescription rates of lower cost generic medications. This measure is now used in 29 states, including 5 statewide organizations, allowing organizations to chart their progress and benchmark themselves against others.

## **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.**

Evidence-based programs and policies that improve wellness and healthy behaviors across populations are projected to yield healthcare savings of \$19 billion over 10 years. To help foster these programs, NQF, with funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), drafted *The Guide for Community Action*, a handbook that supports individuals and groups working together at all levels—local, state, and national—to successfully promote and improve population health over time. The handbook is NQF's latest installment in its population health portfolio. NQF helped to define a national framework for population health measurement and has endorsed more than 20 measures with a population health focus, including those addressing influenza and pneumococcal immunizations across healthcare settings, screenings for specific cancers, sexually transmitted infections, osteoporosis, late-stage HIV diagnosis, smoking prevalence, and healthy behaviors such as BMI screening and care, nutrition, and physical activity for children and adults.

## **val•ue** *noun*

Equivalent worth or return in money, material, services, etc.

The value of healthcare is subjective. It weighs costs against the health outcomes achieved, including patient satisfaction and quality of life.



# NQF's Role in Health and Healthcare

NQF's work is national in scope. The impact of that work is improved healthcare and better, safer care for patients in communities and health settings across the country. Following are some examples of the broad range of NQF's work. Please visit NQF's homepage—[www.qualityforum.org](http://www.qualityforum.org)—for updated examples of why measures matter.

## BEST PRACTICES IN PATIENT SAFETY


NQF has a 10-year history of improving patient safety. In this important work, NQF has endorsed more than 100 patient safety measures, recommended 34 Safe Practices for clinical care, and endorsed a set of serious reportable events (SREs). This set—a compilation of serious, harmful, and largely, if not entirely, preventable patient safety events—helps healthcare providers identify, report, and learn from these events so that they can make the healthcare they deliver safer. Together, the NQF-endorsed patient safety measures and Safe Practices and SREs are important tools for tracking and improving patient safety performance in American healthcare.

An important example of NQF's patient safety work is its measures to reduce healthcare-associated infections, or HAIs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on any given day, about 1 out of every 20 hospitalized patients has an HAI, costing up to \$33 billion annually. Preventing HAIs has become a national priority for public health and patient safety and reduced acquired infections is now a leading indicator of improved hospital care.

## PATIENT SAFETY FIRST

Since 2010, California's hospitals have worked together to reduce significantly hospital-acquired infections as part of the remarkably successful "Patient Safety First" initiative. In just 2 years, the 182 participating hospitals have saved more than 3,000 lives and nearly \$63 million by reducing sepsis deaths, cases of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP), central-line associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI), and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI).

CONTRIBUTED TO SAVING

3,576   
\$63.8M

26 %

REDUCTION  
Sepsis Deaths Per  
100 Sepsis Cases

57 %

REDUCTION  
VAP Cases Per  
1,000 Ventilator Days

43 %

REDUCTION  
CLABSI Cases Per  
1,000 Central Line Days

24 %

REDUCTION  
CAUTI Cases Per  
1,000 Patient Days



# NQF's Role in Health and Healthcare

In support of HHS's Partnership for Patients initiative, NQF convened the Maternity Action Team to catalyze efforts to reduce early elective deliveries (EED). By committing to shared goals and strategies, the Action Team was a major contributor to the success in reducing EED rates across the nation.

A nationwide "hard stop" EED policy could reduce early elective deliveries to 1.7 percent of all births; avoid 500,000 days spent by newborns in ICUs; and save \$1 billion annually.

The Hospital Corporation of America saw a reduction in early elective deliveries of 55 percent over 2 years in 27 hospitals, correlating with a 16 percent decline in admission rates to neonatal ICUs.

Early elective delivery rates were cut in half from 11.2 percent in 2012 to 4.6 percent in 2013.

## A NATIONWIDE "HARD STOP" EED POLICY COULD:

 **1.7%**

Reduce elective deliveries to an estimated 1.7 % of all births

**500,000**  
FEWER NICU DAYS

Avoid approximately one-half million days in neonatal intensive care units

**SAVE**  
**\$1 Billion**



in healthcare costs annually



# Our Work and Why It Matters

The National Quality Forum (NQF) is an independent organization that brings together leaders and experts to come to consensus on improving healthcare quality and patient safety. Not-for-profit, nonpartisan, and member-driven, NQF's work catalyzes essential improvements in the nation's health and healthcare.

## NQF is quality measurement.

NQF reviews and endorses healthcare quality measures and recommends safe practices in healthcare. NQF has unique status, being recognized by the Office of Management and Budget as a "consensus-based organization." This status allows NQF to define which measures or healthcare practices are the best, evidence-based approaches. The federal government, states, and private sector organizations rely on NQF's endorsed measures as "best in class" to evaluate performance and share information with patients and their families. Together, NQF measures and standards serve as a critically important foundation for initiatives to enhance healthcare value by:

- **Making patient care safer;**
- **Achieving better health outcomes;**
- **Ensuring that consistent, high-quality performance information is publicly available;**
- **Providing data to allow for true comparisons of healthcare performance; and**
- **Holding down costs.**

## NQF is a national forum.

NQF gets the right people around the table to tackle complex and sometimes controversial quality issues, drawing upon the best available science. By bringing together all stakeholders involved—patients, physicians, hospitals, health plans, insurers, and representatives of the federal government and private industry—NQF leadership effectively facilitates an open, thorough dialog that results in consensus recommendations that advance healthcare.

## qual•i•ty *noun*

Character with respect to fineness, or grade of excellence.

Quality is how good something is. For healthcare, it is often expressed in a range. When a person receives high-quality healthcare, he or she has received the right services, at the right time, and in the right way to achieve the best possible health.



# Our Work and Why It Matters

## NQF is advancing measurement science.

NQF continuously explores, develops, and implements new, more efficient ways to improve quality measurement and make it more meaningful to patients and providers. From seeking ways to increase the supply of real-time, performance data to providers by endorsing e-Measures, to accelerating the delivery of new, most-needed measures to the marketplace, to facilitating direct feedback from patients to providers about the care they received, NQF is the national leader in the growing and ever-evolving field of measurement science.

## NQF is its members.

Representing more than 400 private sector organizations, NQF's members include consumer organizations, public and private purchasers, physicians and nurses, hospitals, and health plans, accrediting and certifying bodies, manufacturers, government agencies, and other stakeholders. NQF members from every sector of healthcare participate in NQF committees to review quality measures, make recommendations on measures to be used in federal reporting and payment programs, and define measurement science. Through the National Quality Partners, members also serve on action teams, collaborations of national organizations that spur implementation of evidence-based improvements to care and safety.

## NQF's work transforms American healthcare.

By endorsing performance measures that matter and by working together with providers, patients, healthcare purchasers, and policymakers to identify strategies to close recognized healthcare gaps, NQF and its many partners are improving the quality of care, enhancing safety, improving the health of the nation, and reducing costs.

## **Setting the Gold Standard for Quality.**

NQF selects and endorses the best measures of healthcare quality, including over 600 clinical, patient experience, population health, and cost measures.

## **An Essential Forum.**

NQF's 400 plus organizational members and more than 800 volunteers span healthcare, including patients, providers, health plans, purchasers, industry, consumers, public and community agencies, and measure development science.

## **Quality Leadership.**

A national convener of stature, NQF brings together the private and public sectors to reach consensus on healthcare's leading, complex—and sometimes controversial—issues in order to move the field forward.