

## **Response to OMB follow-up comment**

We have contacted BEA staff to clarify their timing needs for MEPS-IC data.

Currently MEPS-IC private-sector estimates are published on our Web site in mid-July. However, BEA must have these estimates no later than mid-June in order to incorporate them into their annual revisions. To meet this need, AHRQ has been producing, as part of the official MEPS-IC production schedule, files of estimates that are formatted to be used in BEA systems. These files are reviewed and approved by both Census and AHRQ and are released to BEA by mid-June, prior to the formatting and publication of official tables for the MEPS Web site.

With the new MEPS-IC collection strategy, AHRQ will be accelerating the timing of the private-sector data so they will be available 12 months sooner. Our schedule will continue to include the release of estimates to BEA no later than mid-June. BEA has verified that this meets their timing needs for national, state and county estimation. In addition, we have asked Census to reexamine the MEPS-IC production schedule to see if additional time improvements can be made. Over the past seven survey years, we have moved up our Web publication date by six weeks due to process improvements. We will continue to work with Census to shorten the schedule for BEA's and other users' benefit.

MEPS-IC also produces public-sector estimates for BEA. However BEA has not been able to incorporate these data into their annual revisions until a year after our private sector data because BEA needs them by the first week of May and we cannot produce them until July. With the new MEPS-IC collection strategy, AHRQ will be accelerating the timing of the public-sector data by 9 months, producing them in September of the prior year. While this improvement will still not put the timing of the public-sector data on par with the private-sector data, BEA will now be receiving public-sector data in time to incorporate it into a round of revisions one year earlier than they are able to currently. The timing of the public-sector data is dependent upon the availability of the Census of Governments (for employment control totals), so moving that data release from September up to May is not feasible. Please note that BEA has always indicated that having the MEPS-IC private-sector data is their higher priority.

In conclusion, for a given calendar year of output for the both private and public sector, BEA will be able to incorporate MEPS-IC results into their processes a full year earlier than is currently possible.