

What is MEPS?

Medical Expenditure Panel Survey

Agency for Health Research and Quality

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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MEPS

Medical Expenditure Panel Survey

What Is the Household Component of MEPS? [illustration]

The Household Component is a survey of thousands of households across the country. Each year a new panel of households is asked to participate in the study. Although the survey is ongoing in nature, each household is asked to participate in only five interviews covering a 2-year period. The average interview lasts about 2 hours.

The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) is a unique nation wide study that provides vital information on health care use and costs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the only survey of its kind to develop a complete picture of the Nation's health care by combining data from two dynamic sources — households in the United States and their medical care providers. Because of this innovative design, MEPS is unparalleled for the amount of detailed information it can provide to the health care community and the Nation.

What is the Survey About?

The primary purpose of the survey is to collect information about the use of medical care and medical costs from people across the country. We will ask you questions about the health care used by you and other members of your family, and any health insurance your family may have. Data from the study are used to estimate the health care and insurance needs of households, and will answer such questions as how many people have health insurance and how families pay for their health care needs. Topics covered in this survey include health conditions you and your family may have, health status, age, education, employment, and health insurance coverage. Data collected in the Household Component are combined with data collected from the households' medical providers to provide a comprehensive picture of health care in the United States.

How Was My Household Chosen?

You may remember participating in another U.S. Department of Health and Human Services survey last year, the National Health Interview Survey. Certain households from that survey were selected to serve as a representative sample of the country; your household represents thousands of others.

Does My Family Have to Participate?

No. Participation in this survey is voluntary. At any time, you or any member of your household can decide not to participate. If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty and your family will not lose any benefit to which you are entitled.

Why Does My Household Need to Participate?

Think of America's health care as a jigsaw puzzle. Many pieces are needed to complete this puzzle; each particular puzzle piece has unique characteristics, and no other puzzle piece can replace Your household is a vital piece of this puzzle, and your participation will ensure that all households like yours are represented.

“My participation makes a difference.”

What Are the Results Used For?

After the information is collected and compiled, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) makes it available to private and public agencies of the health care community. The answers given by MEPS participants provide information necessary to plan for future health care needs.

What Do I Have to Do?

Participation is simple; all you have to do is sit down with a trained interviewer and answer questions about your family's health care experiences. Keeping records of your family's health care events will make the interview go faster. We will contact you in advance of each interview, and the interview will be scheduled at your convenience. This is an easy opportunity to perform a valuable public service.

Who Is Conducting the Survey?

The survey is conducted by a team of trained interviewers from Westat, a national research company based in the Washington, DC area. All interviewers wear an identification badge and use laptop computers to record your answers to the survey.

How Do I know My Answers Will Be Kept Confidential?

Because your rights to confidentiality are protected by law! The confidentiality of data collected for MEPS is protected by Federal law under, Sections 934(c) and 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 299c-3(c) and 242m(d)], and will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

All personal identifying information, such as names and addresses, will be removed before survey information is released to researchers outside the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

What If I Have Other Questions?

If you have questions about this study, please call Alex Scott at this toll-free number:
1-800-945-MEPS (6377)

To learn more about MEPS, we invite you to visit the web site of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (www.ahrq.gov) or the web site the Agency maintains about this survey (www.meps.ahrq.gov).

To learn more about Westat visit www.westat.com.

Thank You for Participating in This Important Survey.

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This survey is conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
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