

Dear Community Authority Representative,

In response to the need for accurate figures about the use, cost, and quality of medical care in this country, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is conducting the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS). This large-scale national survey will be conducted in your community and approximately 200 others across the nation. During the next two and a half years, survey representatives will interview participants from selected households in your area. The purpose of the study is to understand how changes in the way Americans receive and pay for health care have affected health care use, and to use that information to help guide future changes in health care policy.

Because the entire U.S. population cannot be interviewed, we have chosen a sample of communities and households that represent the nation. This statistically reliable sample selection process ensures that the households selected represent thousands of other similar households across the country, as well as themselves. Their participation is very important if the survey is to provide a true picture of the health care experiences of people living in the United States in the 21st century.

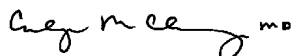
All answers to the survey are confidential and will be kept private to the extent permitted by law; no identifying information is ever used in reports. Individual answers are summarized to give an overall picture of the health care use and expenses of people in this country.

Westat, a national research organization, is carrying out the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. Every interviewer is professionally trained and carries an identification card certifying that the interviewer is an authorized survey representative.

We would greatly appreciate your help in reassuring persons who make inquiries as to both the importance and legitimacy of this undertaking. If you would like additional information about the study, please ask the survey representative. You also may visit the study website at: <http://www.meps.ahrq.gov>.

If you have any other questions about the survey, please contact Alex Scott, toll free, at 1-800-945-MEPS (6377).

Sincerely,



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