

MEPS

Medical Expenditure Panel Survey

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
[MEPS logo]

What is the household component of MEPS?

The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) is a unique nationwide study that provides vital information on health care use and costs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. MEPS has been collecting data continuously since 1996.

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?

MEPS collects information about the use of medical care and about the costs and quality of that care. Individuals and families across the United States are asked about the medical care they receive and about other factors that affect their ability to get the medical care they need. The study also includes questions about age and education, health conditions, employment, health insurance, and other topics. Under the unique MEPS design, information collected from households is combined with information 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; as one of those households, you represent thousands of others that were not selected.

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 or not to answer specific questions. If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty and your family will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Who is conducting the survey?

The survey is being conducted for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AHRQ's mission is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.

A team of trained interviewers from Westat, a national research company based in the Washington, DC area, conduct the interviews. All interviewers wear identification badges like the one on the back of this brochure and use laptop computers to record your answers to the survey.

What do I have to do?

The survey asks questions about health care visits, costs and payments for services, and information about your health care providers. Having notes or records of your family's health care makes it easier to answer the survey questions. We will contact you in advance of each interview and will be happy to schedule the interview at your convenience. Talking with a MEPS interviewer is an opportunity for valuable public service.

How do I know my answers will be kept confidential?

Because your rights to confidentiality are protected by law! This survey is authorized under 42 U.S.C. 299a. The confidentiality of your responses to this survey is protected by Sections 944(c) and 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 299c-3(c) and 42 U.S.C.242m(d)]. Information that could identify you will not be disclosed unless you have consented to that disclosure.

Personally identifiable information such as names and addresses is removed before survey information is released to researchers outside the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

How are the results used?

After the information is collected and compiled, AHRQ makes MEPS data available to public and private agencies of the health care community. The answers given by MEPS participants provide information that can be used to plan for future health care needs.

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) where you can access the Participants' Corner.

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

Your interviewer will be wearing an identification badge that looks like this: [Image of ID badge]

[DHHS logo] This survey is conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Your participation can make a difference