

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MEDICAL EXPENDITURE PANEL SURVEY

## **The Purpose of This Research**

The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) is one of the major research efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is conducted by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). MEPS is an on-going, nationwide survey that studies the cost of health care and the way Americans pay for that health care. Information is collected through household interviews and linked to information collected from your medical providers.

## **How Your Household Can Participate**

Information for this survey is collected for all family members living in your household. Generally, one adult family member answers the survey questions for the entire family although all family members are encouraged to be present. Interviews are conducted by trained field interviewers who call on you at home to conduct the interview. Every household is asked to complete 5 interviews over a 2 ½ year period. While the length of each in-person interview varies depending on family size and health experiences, the average interview can be completed in about 1 to 1 ½ hours. Having notes or records of your family's health care will make it easier to answer the survey questions. The interviewer will ask about your family's visits for health care and about related topics that help researchers understand health care experiences such as age, education, health status, employment, and health insurance coverage.

## **Protecting the Confidentiality of the Information You Provide**

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. All personally identifiable information such as names or addresses will be removed before information from this survey is released to researchers outside the Department of Health and Human Services.

## **Participation in MEPS**

Households selected for MEPS have an opportunity to provide an important and valuable public service. But participation in the study is voluntary. There is no penalty or loss of benefits if a household or an individual member of the household chooses not to participate in the study or in any particular part of the study.

## **Benefits of This Research**

MEPS data are used by researchers in Federal and State governments, universities, and the private sector to understand the costs of health care and inform decisions about health care issues.

## **To Learn More About MEPS**

To learn more about this study, you may visit the study website at: <http://www.meps.ahrq.gov> or contact Alex Scott, a study representative at 1-800-945-MEPS (6377).