

EPC Review Team Agreement

The EPC Program follows three principles – to be relevant and timely, to be objective and scientifically rigorous, and to be transparent and engage the public¹.

Consistent with the principle of transparency and dedication to public engagement, the EPC program makes final and draft reports and other products publicly available for use or comment. However, to ensure that reports are scientifically rigorous, the EPC program adheres to a structured editorial and peer review process for quality assurance prior to public posting. The EPC review team member agrees to maintain confidentiality with respect to nonpublic interim documents, or any draft (nonpublic) EPC report versions, or final nonpublic EPC reports (“Confidential Information”).

The EPC shall not, without prior written approval of AHRQ, use for its own benefit, publish, copy, or otherwise disclose to others, or permit the use by others for its benefit or to the detriment of AHRQ, any Confidential Information.

The EPC shall maintain the confidentiality of Confidential Information until: the EPC report is finalized and published on the AHRQ site and no longer qualifies as Confidential; five years elapses from the date of this agreement; or until AHRQ sends the EPC written notice releasing them from this Agreement, whichever occurs first.

The obligations of the EPC under this agreement do not extend to information that is (a) publicly known at the time of participation in the EPC project or subsequently becomes publicly known through no fault of the EPC; (b) discovered or created by the EPC before participation in the EPC project; (c) learned by the EPC through legitimate means other than from the EPC project; or (d) is disclosed in the EPC project with AHRQ’s written approval.

The IOM report on Standards for Systematic Review² also emphasizes the importance of protecting systematic reviewers from undue influence –

2.3.1. Protect the independence of the review team to make the final decisions about the design, analysis, and reporting of the review

To ensure that there is broad input and to ensure that the EPC review team maintains its independence, the EPC program has designated specific opportunities for public comment at various stages of the process. Except through these venues, the EPC review team should not accept unsolicited input and should refer unsolicited communications to the AHRQ representative.

My signature indicates that I understand and agree to comply with the terms of this Agreement.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

References:

1. Slutsky J, Atkins D, Chang S, et al. AHRQ Series Paper 1: Comparing medical interventions: AHRQ and the Effective Health Care Program. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2010; 63, 481-483.
2. Institute of Medicine. (2011). Finding What Works in Health Care: Standards for Systematic Reviews. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Available at: Institute of Medicine. <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2011/Finding-What-Works-in-Health-Care-Standards-for-Systematic-Reviews/Standards%20for%20Systematic%20Review%202010%20Insert.pdf>. Accessed July 2012