

AHRQ's Evidence-based Practice Center Program

Synthesizing evidence to improve health care practice and delivery

AHRQ's Evidence-based Practice Center Program Conducts Evidence Reviews for Federal Agencies

What Is AHRQ's Evidence-based Practice Center Program?

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the lead Federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that is charged with improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. One of its programs, the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) Program, funds 13 independent EPCs across the United States and Canada to conduct rigorous, comprehensive evidence reviews of the scientific literature. These reviews focus on a variety of issues, including comparing clinical drugs or treatments, and interventions to improve health care delivery.

Federal agencies can ask the EPC Program to conduct evidence reviews for specific topics by establishing an Interagency Agreement (IAA). These reviews can provide Federal agencies with the evidence needed to inform a variety of policy and program decisions.

What Are the Benefits of Having the EPC Program Conduct Evidence Reviews?

The EPC Program has an established and rigorous process for conducting evidence reviews. This includes checking all authors for conflicts of interest, obtaining input from stakeholders, posting drafts for public comment, and obtaining peer review. More information about the methods used is available at:

- ◆ Methods Guide for Effectiveness and Comparative Effectiveness Reviews
<https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/topics/ceer-methods-guide/overview>
- ◆ Methods Guide for Medical Test Reviews
<https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/topics/methods-guidance-tests/overview-2012>

How Can Federal Agencies Work With AHRQ?

There are 5 steps to having the EPC Program conduct an evidence review:

- ◆ **Step 1: Define scope.** Federal agencies work with AHRQ to define the scope of work. This helps the agency identify the most appropriate type of product to meet their needs.
- ◆ **Step 2: Complete the IAA forms.** These include (1) sponsoring partner role checklist, (2) the 7600A form (describing the general terms and conditions of the IAA with AHRQ), and (3) 7600B form (describing the products they wish to attain).



- ◆ **Step 3: Execute the IAA.** The appropriate parties at AHRQ and the sponsoring Federal agency must review and sign the forms (typically includes the program, budget, and contracting offices). The IAA funds are then transferred from the Federal agency to AHRQ.
- ◆ **Step 4: AHRQ contracts with an EPC.** AHRQ will draft a request for task order to solicit EPC proposals based on the scope of work contracted by the Federal agency. AHRQ will then review proposals and select an EPC to conduct the review. The Federal agency sponsoring the review may participate in this selection process as well.
- ◆ **Step 5: Work with AHRQ and the EPC during the review process.** To help make sure the evidence review meets the needs of the Federal agency sponsoring the review, there are multiple opportunities to provide input during the review process. This includes participating on conference calls with the EPC, providing feedback as a key informant or member of the technical expert panel, and reviewing and providing feedback on the draft report.

AHRQ EPC Products

Product	Description
Topic Brief	Brief review of the literature to better understand what is already known about a topic and to identify the clinical and/or policy context. A topic brief is often done to further define the scope and feasibility of a topic.
Technical Brief	Scoping review or evidence map that uses a systematic approach to describing the evidence in a new or developing area. A technical brief provides an objective description of the current science, a potential framework for assessing the intervention, and identifies future research needs.
Systematic Review	A systematic review summarizes available evidence, grades evidence, synthesizes data on outcomes, and attempts to answer questions such as whether an intervention is safe or effective. A systematic review provides decisionmakers with accurate, independent, scientifically rigorous information. This information can then be used to inform guidelines, policies, and programs.

What Is the Timeline?

Federal agencies should estimate about 5 months from agreement on the scope of work to the start of the project. During this time, AHRQ is working to establish the IAA and the contractual agreement with the EPC.

What Are Some Examples of Reviews?

Report	Partner Agency	Product Type	Purpose
Glasgow Coma Scale for Field Triage of Trauma: A Systematic Review (https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/topics/field-triage-glasgow/research-2017)	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	Systematic Review	To update guidelines
Total Worker Health (https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/topics/worker-health/research)	National Institutes of Health	Systematic Review	To inform a multi-stakeholder workshop
Strategies for Improving the Lives of Women Age 40 and Above Living With HIV/AIDS (https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/topics/women-hiv/technical-brief)	Office of Women's Health	Technical Brief	To inform program planning
Topic Briefs: Addressing Health Disparities (http://www.pcori.org/sites/default/files/PCORI-Addressing-Disparities-Topic-Brief-1-to-6-011314.pdf)	Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute	Topic Briefs	To prioritize future research

Contact for More Information:

If you are interested in learning more about how to partner with the EPC Program or in obtaining the required IAA forms or prices for reviews, contact:

EPC@ahrq.hhs.gov



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