

Maryland Hospital Extraordinary Circumstances Quality Reporting Exceptions (MECE) Policy

Updated March 2025

Maryland hospitals do not participate in the Medicare national Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) or Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS), but instead the hospitals' payment rates are set for all payers by the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) through the agreement the State has with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The HSCRC has implemented several pay-for-performance initiatives that provide incentives for hospitals to improve patient care and value over time that rely on data submitted by hospitals to the State or to CMS.

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) has established State hospital quality reporting requirements, per [COMAR 10.25.04.02](#).

The HSCRC and MHCC have prioritized aligning the National and State hospital reporting and pay-for-performance programs to the extent possible. Consistent with CMS for hospitals nationally, Maryland hospitals must comply with all CMS Inpatient Quality Reporting (IQR) and Outpatient Quality Report (OQR) requirements.

Maryland hospitals may request an exception with respect to the reporting of required quality data—including digitally-specified electronic Clinical Quality Measure (eCQM) data and Core Clinical Data Elements (CCDE) for Hybrid measures— when there are extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the hospital. As detailed below, the process for Maryland hospitals to submit these requests aligns with the CMS process for Extraordinary Circumstances Exceptions (ECE) requests for IPPS/OPPS hospitals outside of Maryland, but the requests will be submitted via the HSCRC for initial review. The HSCRC and MHCC will coordinate with CMS on guidelines for granting these requests and provide CMS with any approval recommendations.

Non-Digital ECEs

Hospitals may request an exception from various quality reporting requirements due to extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the facility. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, natural disasters (such as a severe hurricane or flood) or systemic problems with CMS data collection systems that directly affected the ability of facilities to submit data.

For ECEs not related to digital measures, hospitals must submit the CMS Extraordinary Circumstances Exceptions (ECE) Request Form, with **all** required sections completed **within 90 calendar days of the extraordinary circumstance**. The hospital

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may request consideration for an exception of the requirement to submit quality data for one or more quarters.

Digital Measures ECEs

Hospitals may utilize the ECE form to request an exception from the Maryland and CMS Hospital IQR Program's digital measures reporting requirement for the applicable program reporting period, based on hardships preventing hospitals from electronically reporting. Such circumstances could include, but are not limited to, infrastructure challenges (a hospital is in an area without sufficient Internet access) or unforeseen circumstances, such as vendor issues outside of the hospital's control (including a vendor product losing certification). For further information, reference the ECE Policy Clarification Questions and Answers.

In the event of such circumstances:

- **For HSCRC Digital Measures ECEs:** To be eligible for \$150,000 bonus in Rate Year 2027, Maryland requires hospitals to submit data to HSCRC (CY 2025 for eQMs and 7/1/25 to 6/30/26 for Hybrid CCDE) for the first six months of the reporting period, and then quarterly thereafter (see link below for HSCRC Digital Reporting Information and Timeline). Hospitals may otherwise defer to the CMS annual reporting timeline, and if they are unable to report, must submit an ECE Request with all required sections completed by the CMS data submission window.
- **For CMS Digital Measures ECEs:** For eQMs and CCDE, hospitals must submit an ECE Request Form with all required sections completed within 3 months following the end of the reporting period. As an example, for eCQM data collection for the CY 2019 reporting period, hospitals would have had until March 31, 2020, to submit an ECE request.

ECE Forms and Resources

File Name	File Type	Action
CMS ECE Policy Clarification Questions and Answers	PDF	Download - Opens in new browser tab
Maryland Extraordinary Circumstances Exceptions (ECE) Request Form	GOOGLE Survey Form	Click here for form.
CMS Extraordinary Circumstances Exceptions (ECE) Quick Reference	PDF	Download - Opens in new browser tab
HSCRC Digital Reporting Information and Timeline	PDF	Click here for web page.

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ECE Request Form Submission Instructions

The form must be signed (typing name constitutes signature) by the hospital's chief executive officer (CEO) or designee, and submitted by clicking the "submit" button at the completion of the form. Supporting documentation must be provided through email: hscrc.quality@maryland.gov, Subject line: ECE Request

If the request seeks exemption from submitting or reporting CMS IQR, OQR or digital measures data, HSCRC will forward the ECE request to CMS after its review and determination on whether the request should be approved. If the request seeks exemption from submitting data to MHCC, HSCRC will collaborate with MHCC on determining the disposition of the request. HSCRC is the final arbiter for requests related to an exemption of reporting or use of HSCRC Case Mix data in the quality programs.

Note: This process does not preclude CMS from granting exceptions to hospitals when it is determined that an extraordinary circumstance, such as an act of nature, affects an entire region or locale. CMS may also grant an exception if it is determined that a systemic problem with one of its data collection systems directly affected the ability of the hospitals to submit data. If CMS makes the determination to grant a blanket exception, CMS will communicate this decision to hospitals, vendors, HSCRC, MHCC and Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN- QIOs) through routine communication channels, including memos, emails, and notices on QualityNet.