

CORE™ Phase I Certification: A Step-By-Step Process



Overview

Thank you for your interest in CORE Phase I certification for entities that create, use, or transmit eligibility data, including clearinghouses, health plans, providers and vendors. Entities that do not create, use or transmit patient eligibility data, or are a small provider, can demonstrate their support for the CORE mission and vision and Phase I operating rules by applying for and using the CORE Endorser Seal. Please refer to the [CORE Phase I Endorser Seal: Application Process](#) document for further information.

The CORE Phase I certification process has four components:

- I. Pre-certification Planning and Systems Evaluation
- II. Signing and Submitting the CORE Pledge
- III. CORE Certification Testing
- IV. Applying for the CORE Seal

Each of the components has multiple steps which must be completed prior to moving on to the next component.

The CORE documents required to complete each component step are indicated and accessible through the included links to the CAQH website. All required documents also may be accessed at http://www.caqh.org/CORE_certification.php. The key contact to answer your questions about specific steps also is indicated at the end of each component.

See [page 6](#) for a visual of the key steps for the CORE Phase I certification process.

Component I: Pre-certification Planning and Systems Evaluation

1. Obtain and review the [CORE Phase I Rules and Policies Version 1.0.0](#).
2. Obtain and review the [CORE 102: Certification Policy Version 1.0.0](#).
3. Obtain and review the [CORE 104: Testing Policy Version 1.0.0](#).
4. Obtain and review the [CORE Phase I Master Test Suite Version 1.0.0](#) (includes rules against which you will be tested).
5. Obtain and review the [CORE Master Test Suite Supplement Version 1.0.1](#).
6. Obtain and review the CORE Phase I Master Test Bed Data Version 1.0.0.
 - [CORE Master Test Bed Data - Wrapped](#)
 - [CORE Master Test Bed Data - Unwrapped](#)
7. Gauge your organization's ability to adopt and become compliant with the CORE Phase I rules by identifying systems/software gaps.

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8. Create a project plan to eliminate any gaps found between CORE rule requirements and your organization's current systems capabilities. All gaps should be closed prior to the start of CORE certification testing.
9. Determine if your organization is eligible for the CORE Health Plan IT System Exemption by reviewing the [CORE 103: Exemption Policy Version 1.0.0](#). This exemption allows a health plan that has a scheduled migration of an existing IT system(s) to delay certification of that component of its systems until the new one is in place. Phase I IT exemptions will only be granted until December 31, 2007. All CORE-certified health plans must be fully Phase I compliant by December 31, 2008, unless a CORE-certified health plan acquires another health plan that is not CORE-certified after December 31, 2007. If such an acquisition occurs by a CORE-certified health plan, that CORE-certified health plan may seek additional/new IT system exemptions for its newly acquired entity.

If your organization qualifies for this exemption, obtain and complete the [Health Plan IT Exemption Request Form](#). This completed form (signed by an authorized senior executive) must be submitted with your organization's signed [CORE Seal Application](#).

10. Determine when your organization is ready to sign the CORE 101: Pledge Version 1.0.0.

NOTE: Organizations seeking CORE certification must complete CORE certification testing within 180 days of submitting the signed CORE Pledge to CAQH. The CORE Pledge must be signed by an authorized executive-level employee.

Questions: Contact CAQH at (202) 861-6380

Component II: Signing and Submitting the CORE Pledge

1. Sign the [CORE 101: Pledge Version 1.0.0](#).

NOTE: Organizations seeking CORE certification must complete CORE certification testing within 180 days of submitting the signed CORE Pledge to CAQH. The CORE Pledge must be signed by an authorized executive-level employee.

2. Submit the signed CORE 101: Pledge Version 1.0.0 to CAQH.

Organizations seeking CORE certification may submit a signed CORE Pledge form via e-mail (CORE@caqh.org), fax: (202) 861-1454, or mail: CORE, c/o CAQH, 601 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, South Building, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004.

Questions: Contact CAQH at (202) 861-6380

Component III: CORE Certification Testing

CORE certification testing is to be completed in three phases: Pre-Testing, Testing and Post-Testing. All stakeholders essential to the success of eligibility and benefits data-exchange transactions are addressed in the CORE Phase I certification testing process – providers, health plans, clearinghouses, and vendors. CORE testing varies by each stakeholder type.

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A. *Pre-Certification Phase* (this step may be performed prior to submitting the [CORE 101: Pledge Version 1.0.0](#). CORE-authorized testing vendors also may offer pre-certification testing. Contact your [CORE-authorized testing vendor](#) for more information.)

1. Obtain and review the [CORE 104: Testing Policy Version 1.0.0](#).
2. Obtain and review the [CORE Phase I Master Test Suite Version 1.0.0](#) (includes rules against which you will be tested).
3. Obtain and review the [CORE Master Test Suite Supplement Version 1.0.1](#).
4. Obtain and review the CORE Phase I Master Test Bed Data Version 1.0.0.
 - [CORE Master Test Bed Data - Wrapped](#)
 - [CORE Master Test Bed Data - Unwrapped](#)
5. Upgrade all affected IT systems/software as necessary to bring them into compliance with CORE Phase I rules.
6. Complete internal testing of CORE-ready systems.
7. Obtain a list of [CORE-authorized testing vendors](#).
8. Select and contact the CORE-authorized certification testing vendor with whom you wish to work. CORE-authorized testing vendors also may offer pre-certification testing.

B. *Testing Phase*

1. Schedule CORE certification testing with your selected CORE-authorized testing vendor. CORE-authorized vendors are committed to completing a CORE certification testing request within 30 business days from when you contact them, unless you ask otherwise.
2. Complete CORE certification testing within the 180-day pledge window.

C. *Post-Testing Phase*

1. Remediate all systems/software issues identified by the CORE-authorized testing entity and, if necessary, repeat the certification testing.

Questions: Contact the CORE-authorized testing vendor you have selected with any questions or concerns related to any phase of the CORE-certification testing process.

NOTES:

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- Upon successful completion of the certification testing, the CORE-authorized testing vendor will provide you with documentation attesting to the successful completion of your organizations CORE certification testing.
- Any fee/cost imposed by the CORE-authorized testing vendor will be independent and separate from the fee charged by CORE for your organization to obtain the CORE Seal.
- *Complaints regarding CORE-authorized testing vendors:* In the event an entity seeking CORE certification is dissatisfied with its testing results, it may file an appeal with CAQH. CORE will investigate the appeal within 20 business days of receipt of the appeal. If the appeal is deemed valid, CORE will require the CORE-authorized testing entity to re-test the entity within 21 business days of CORE's request. See the [CORE 104: Testing Policy Version 1.0.0](#) for more information.

For complaints or appeals regarding the CORE-authorized testing vendor: contact CAQH at (202) 861-6380.

Component IV: Applying For the CORE Seal

1. Determine your CORE Seal fee by reviewing the fee scale below or on the [CORE Phase I Seal Application](#) form.

The fee for the CORE Seal is based upon a stakeholder-specific fee scale. This fee is a one-time cost for CORE Phase I certification, unless an entity becomes de-certified. For more information about certification and de-certification, see the [CORE 102: Eligibility and Benefits Certification Policy Version 1.0.0](#).

CORE Seal Fee Scale	
Health Plans	
Below \$75 million in net annual revenue:	\$4,000 fee
\$75 million and above in net annual revenue:	\$6,000 fee
Vendors	
Below \$75 million in net annual revenue:	\$4,000 fee
\$75 million and above in net annual revenue:	\$6,000 fee
Providers	
Up to \$1 billion in net annual revenue:	\$ 500 fee
\$1 billion and above in net annual revenue:	\$1,500 fee
Federal or State Government Entities	No fee

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2. Complete the [CORE Phase I Seal Application](#) form.
3. Package the completed CORE Phase I Seal Application form with the following required paperwork:
 - a. Successful testing results from a CORE-authorized testing vendor affirming successful completion of CORE certification testing.
 - b. Completed [HIPAA Attestation Form](#) (the form must be signed by an authorized executive).
 - c. If applicable, a [Health Plan IT Exemption Request Form](#). The form must include an executive-level attestation stating that the health plan meets the agreed-upon IT system exemption criteria and has the ability to identify those transactions to which the exemption applies.
4. Submit the CORE Phase I Seal Application form with a check for the appropriate CORE Seal fee to:

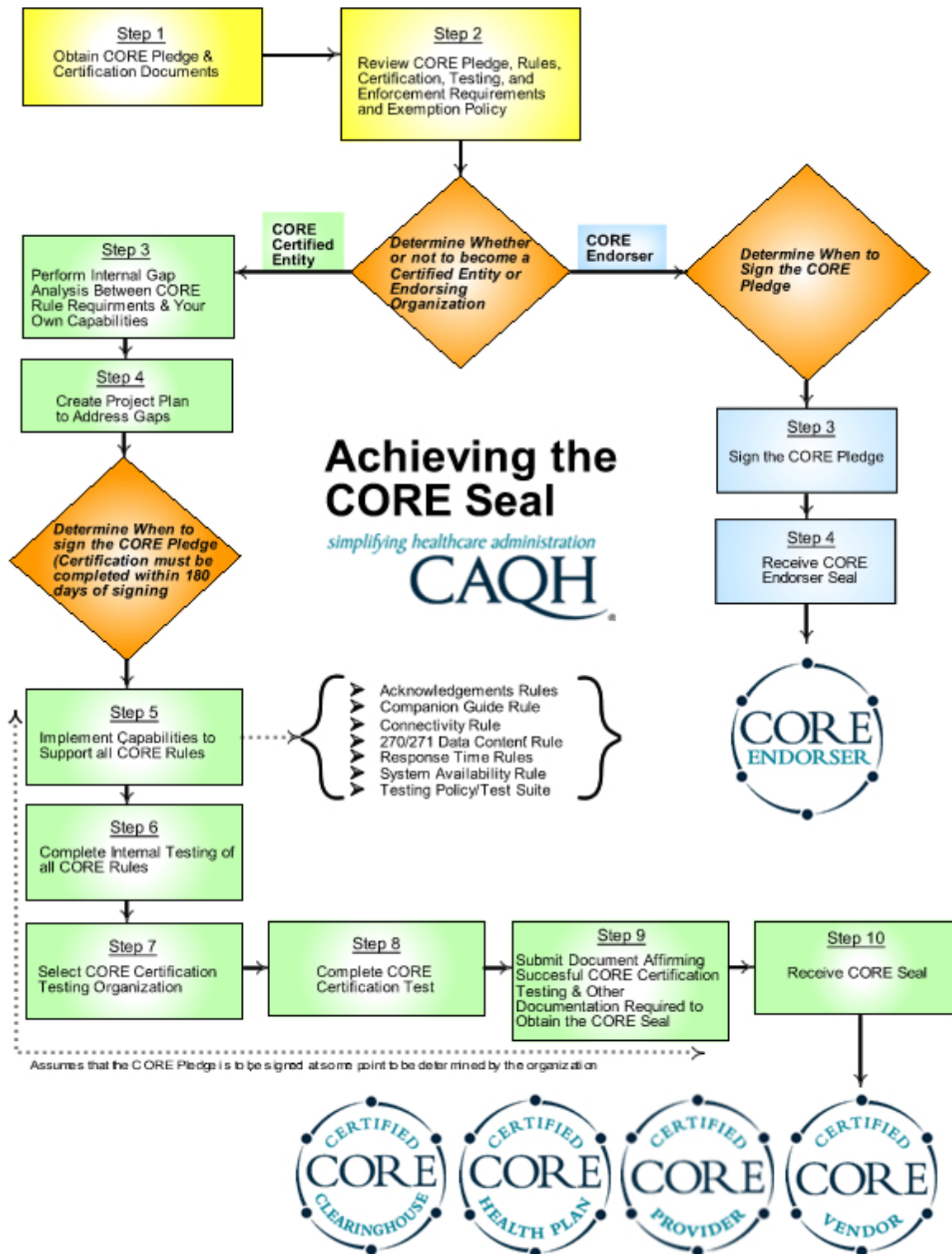
CORE, c/o CAQH, 601 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
South Building, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004.

Questions: Contact CAQH at (202) 861-6380

NOTES:

- CORE will inform each CORE Seal applicant of its queue status at the time of its application submission.
- Upon receiving a CORE Phase I Seal Application form, CORE will have a maximum of 20 business days to complete its assessment of the application and respond to the applicant with a clear response of approval or need for clarification.
- A final decision about the CORE Seal application will be made by CORE in 30 business days, unless there are extenuating circumstances. If so, CORE will notify the applicant about the reason for the assessment extension.
- The 12-month Health Plan IT System Exemption period will begin on the day that the health plan granted an exemption is granted its CORE Seal.
- After receiving a CORE Seal, the certified entity may market itself as being CORE-certified.
- CORE will report on its website:
 - CORE-certified entities and endorsers
 - The number of certification applications it has received by stakeholder type
 - The number that are in process by stakeholder type on a monthly basis

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CORE Phase I Certification Terms and Conditions

CORE certification will remain valid unless a certified entity's seal is revoked as a result of a validated complaint of non-compliance. See the [CORE 105: Enforcement Policy Version 1.0.0](#) for more information.

After remedying the issue which led to the validated complaint of non-compliance, the de-certified entity is free to seek re-certification at any time. De-certified entities will need to complete the entire certification process and pay all applicable fees to achieve CORE certification.

NOTE: CORE Phase I rules may be substantially modified one time during the first year if agreed to by a vote of the entire CORE membership. If that substantial modification takes place, all entities (certified for CORE Phase I or not) will need to complete the entire CORE certification process and pay all applicable fees to achieve CORE certification for the modified set of Phase I rules.