Appendix 3-A. Clearance Process for AHRQ and Third-Party Press Releases

Press releases from AHRQ require clearance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA). The clearance process begins with the Office of Communications and Knowledge Transfer (OCKT) and proceeds as follows:

1. OCKT media relations staff and the OCKT strategic planner draft or review an initial version of the release. Edits are incorporated.

2. The AHRQ subject matter expert reviews the next draft. Edits are incorporated.

3. If applicable, the draft is sent to the grantee, contractor, or partner for review. A quote from a grantee, contractor, or partner representative can be incorporated, if appropriate.

4. The press release then undergoes AHRQ clearance, where it is reviewed and approved by the strategic planner, the OCKT Director, and then the AHRQ Director.

When AHRQ clearance is completed, OCKT media relations staff sends the release to ASPA for review and approval by relevant HHS operating divisions, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, if applicable.

If the grantee, contractor, or partner wants to create its own “third-party” press release, the AHRQ program staff, OCKT strategic planner, and OCKT media relations staff establish the terms under which this can occur. At a minimum:

- The press release must acknowledge AHRQ sponsorship.
- AHRQ must approve the press release.
- The press release must go through ASPA clearance if it includes a quote from a Federal spokesperson. OCKT media relations staff will send the press release to ASPA for clearance.
- The press release must not be issued prior to AHRQ’s press release.