
MEMORANDUM

TO: Nevada SIM Team
From: Ann DePriest and Lacey Hartman, SHADAC
Subject: Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Survey Overview
Date: May 20, 2015
CC: Katherine Griffith, CMMI; Deborah Brown, CHCS

This memo is in response to a request from the Nevada SIM team for a high level overview of the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys and includes some additional detail about the clinician and group, health plan, and hospital surveys. We would be happy to discuss any questions you might have about this information.

Overview

The CAHPS surveys, which are supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), are a family of surveys used to collect information on patient and consumer experiences with health care.¹ There are 10 main surveys in the CAHPS program:

- Health Plan,
- Clinician & Group,
- Surgical Care,
- American Indian,
- Dental Plan,
- Experience of Care and Health Outcomes (ECHO),
- Home Health Care,
- Hospital,
- In-Center Hemodialysis, and
- Nursing Home.

The most widely used CAHPS tools for collecting information on patient experience and satisfaction are the Clinician & Group, Hospital, and Health Plan Surveys. Supplemental question sets are available for some of the surveys for various subpopulations and topics, including cultural competence, health literacy, children with chronic conditions, and Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMHs).

AHRQ has supported the CAHPS Database since 1997, allowing vendors to benchmark their data collection activities and ultimately compare their results with peer groups at the local, regional, and national levels.² The availability of benchmarks also allows practices to evaluate their data and determine quality and performance improvement objectives.

¹ <https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/about-cahps/index.html>

² <https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/about-cahps/principles/index.html>

Clinician and Group Surveys

The Clinician & Group Surveys (CG-CAHPS) are used to survey patients about their recent experiences with clinicians and their staff over a period of the past 12 months.³ CG-CAHPS uses a standard set of patient experience measures and captures information on four domains: patients' ability to get timely appointments, care, and information; how well providers communicate with patients; if the provider's office staff was helpful, courteous, and respectful; and the patients' rating of the provider (on a scale of 0 to 10). For surveys about a child's healthcare, there are additional questions regarding the provider's attention to the child's growth and development and the provider's advice on keeping the child safe and healthy. The adult version of CG-CAHPS can be used for either primary or specialty care settings, while the child version is designed for primary care settings only.

Because of the increasing prevalence of the patient-centered medical home (PCMH) model, an expanded questionnaire was developed that incorporated PCMH supplemental questions into the CG-CAHPS 12-month survey. The additional questions in this supplement address care coordination, information about care and appointments, provider discussion of medical decisions, and provider attentiveness to the patient's mental and emotional health among others.

Health Plan Survey

In addition to the CG-CAHPS questionnaire, there is a CAHPS Health Plan survey tool which is primarily used to assess patients' experiences with their health plans and the services provided. This survey assesses ease of getting care, tests, and/or needed treatments through the patient's health plan; evaluation of written material or online information about the plan from those who sought information; patients' ability to find information on cost of services, equipment, and/or prescriptions; courtesy and respect from customer service representatives; the ease of filling out forms and the speed of handling claims; and the patients' rating of the plan on a scale of 0 to 10 (from worst to best health plan possible). The information from this survey can be used to compare health plans, assess their performance, and to identify areas for improvement.

Hospital Survey

The CAHPS Hospital Survey (HCAHPS) is used to assess patients' recent experiences with hospital care, specifically inpatient medical, surgical, and obstetric care. HCAHPS captures information on hospital experience measures, such as communications with nurses and doctors, responsiveness of hospital staff, cleanliness and quietness of the hospital environment, pain management, communication about medication, discharge information, overall hospital rating, and whether or not the patient would recommend the hospital.⁴ HCAHPS was produced in collaboration between AHRQ and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). When administering the survey, hospitals must use a CMS-approved third-party vendor, unless they have been approved by CMS to collect their own data. All survey administrators must meet a set of minimum requirements set by CMS.⁵ HCAHPS is voluntary; however, it is used to calculate incentive payments for value-based care in the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program under the ACA and is required by hospitals participating in the Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS).

³ <https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/surveys-guidance/cg/12-month/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/HospitalQualityInits/HospitalHCAHPS.html>

⁵ <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/HospitalQualityInits/Downloads/HospitalHCAHPSFactSheet201007.pdf>

There is also a child version of the Hospital Survey, which asks parents to report on both their child's experience with inpatient hospital care as well as their own experience with their child's inpatient hospital care.

Use of CAHPS

The CAHPS surveys are in the public domain, so anyone may download and use them. These surveys are meant to be customizable, using any of the CAHPS supplemental items, by borrowing items from other surveys, or by adding in questions developed for the administrator's needs. However, in order to name it as a CAHPS survey when administering, users must maintain the core items of the CAHPS questionnaire. Keeping these core items allows for users to compare the results of their survey to results from other similar organizations or from data sets available through the CAHPS database.

While AHRQ develops and maintains the CAHPS surveys, they do not administer the questionnaires to consumers. With the exception of the Hospital survey (HCAHPS), organizations using CAHPS are not required to contract with an outside vendor for administration of the surveys, and there is no vendor certification process in order to be able to administer the surveys.⁶ There are some exceptions, however. For example, administration of CAHPS must be completed through a National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) approved [vendor](#) if results are being submitted for HEDIS or other accreditation purposes.⁶ CAHPS is often used as a quality measurement tool for NCQA accreditation as a medical home. The CAHPS [website](#) has some helpful links on how to identify potential vendors for survey administration.

There are a number of advantages to using CAHPS to survey patient experience and satisfaction. The standard set of core measures in the survey allows for the comparability of data across organizations and potentially markets⁷. Also, the survey design principles in place are strong, and the fact that CAHPS must be administered with a set of core questions allows for streamlining and consistency in the data collection and reporting practices. Finally, CAHPS surveys place an emphasis on consumers and patients and reports on actual experiences, not just patient satisfaction with those experiences.

⁶ <https://cahps.ahrq.gov/surveys-guidance/helpful-resources/hiring/index.html>

⁷ Call, Kathleen & Spencer, Donna. "Enrollee/Consumer Surveys." Presented at the SHADAC and State Network Small Group Consultation: Data Needs and Requirements Related to State-Based Marketplaces (SBMs). May 30, 2013.