



PRIMER/BRIEF

The Benefits of CAHPS®

April 2012

What is CAHPS?

The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems ([CAHPS](#)) [program](#) offers a suite of standardized survey instruments for collecting information directly from consumers and patients about their experience in various health care settings. CAHPS surveys are accompanied by a variety of supporting resources, including data collection protocols, analysis programs, reporting guidelines, and a national benchmarking database. The CAHPS website also provides a number of quality improvement resources focused on the patient experience, including the [CAHPS Improvement Guide](#). All CAHPS products are in the public domain and available to users at no charge. Technical assistance, including general guidance as well as project-specific advice, also is provided free of charge through the CAHPS Help Line by emailing cahps1@ahrq.gov or calling 1-800-492-9261. The CAHPS program is funded and administered by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Why Use CAHPS Surveys?

- Most widely used surveys for assessing patient experience of care in the United States
- Survey content shaped by input from [patients](#) and [key stakeholders](#), including health care providers, plans, and purchasers
- Strong track record (since 1995) of [rigorous scientific development and testing](#) to ensure validity and reliability
- Assesses patient and consumer **reports about their experiences**, not just “satisfaction,” thus producing more objective and actionable information for improvement
- Standardized instruments, data collection, analysis, reporting, and benchmarking
- Supplemental items allow customization to meet diverse needs
- All CAHPS surveys are in the public domain and available free of charge

About Aligning Forces for Quality

Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s signature effort to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, as well as reduce racial and ethnic disparities and provide real models for national reform. The Foundation’s commitment to improve health care in 16 AF4Q communities is the largest effort of its kind ever undertaken by a U.S. philanthropy. AF4Q asks the people who get care, give care and pay for care to work together to improve the quality and value of care delivered locally. The Center for Health Care Quality in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services serves as the national program office. Learn more about AF4Q at www.forces4quality.org. Learn more about RWJF’s efforts to improve quality and equality of care at www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/af4q/.

About the Author

The Shaller Consulting Group provides technical assistance to *Aligning Forces for Quality* by helping regional Alliances support patient experience measurement and improvement.

- Free technical assistance and user support provided through the [CAHPS User Network](#)
- Ability to compare to national benchmarks maintained by the [CAHPS Database](#) (see below)
- Endorsed by the [National Quality Forum](#) (NQF)
- Required for accreditation, certification, and payment by a growing number of national- and state-level organizations:
 - [CAHPS Hospital Survey](#) (H-CAHPS) is required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for public reporting (through the [HospitalCompare](#) website) and for value-based purchasing (VBP)
 - [CAHPS Health Plan Survey](#) is required by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for [health plan accreditation](#), as well as by many state Medicaid programs for performance reporting and some commercial purchasing collaboratives for pay-for-performance
 - [CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey](#) (CG-CAHPS) for the patient-centered medical home (PCMH) is now part of the revised standards for the NCQA PCMH practice recognition program
 - CG-CAHPS is included as a required quality measure in the [proposed rules](#) for accountable care organizations (ACOs) released by CMS as part of the Accountable Care Act (ACA)
 - CG-CAHPS also is a likely candidate measure of patient experience to be included by 2013 in the [Physician Compare](#) public reporting website required by ACA
 - The “doctor communication” measures in CG-CAHPS are required by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) for Maintenance of Certification (MOC)
- Core CG-CAHPS questions can be added to existing surveys with minimal cost and disruption to current survey operations; many vendors now offer an integrated CAHPS survey product to their clients at no extra charge

Why Submit Your CAHPS Data to the CAHPS Database?

- Ability to [compare your scores](#) to a large and growing pool of standardized data to assess performance and identify areas for improvement
- For the Clinician & Group and Health Plan surveys, submitters receive access to a secure portal enabling them to compare their CAHPS results directly to relevant benchmarks (for example, by region, size, ownership, specialties, etc.)
- Free service supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Online submission process is simple and easy to use
- Free technical support is available
- Online reporting of results provides ability to conduct custom comparisons and create downloadable reports
- Submission to CAHPS Database supports ongoing development of a research database that can be used by request to answer important questions related to assessing and improving patient experience of care

Benefits of Community-Wide Implementation of CAHPS Surveys

- Elevates the community’s attention to patient centeredness as a key component of high-quality care, in accordance with the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) six aims for improvement
- Local market benchmarks enable participating organizations to compare patient experience performance to market peers
- Use of the NQF-endorsed CAHPS surveys enables comparison of local performance to national benchmarks

- [Community-wide implementation](#) has the potential to lower cost of implementation through group purchasing of vendor services
- Organizations can continue to use existing or new custom questions for internal use and trending alongside the common set of standardized questions
- Standardized measures create the foundation for a collaborative process of improvement by provider organizations focusing on common topics
- Participating organizations gain valuable experience using a national standard that is likely to become a requirement in the future for provider-level reporting, payment, and certification (see above)
- Patients, purchasers, and policy makers have access to important measures of patient experience in addition to existing clinical and process measures
- Results can be used to satisfy many state and national reporting requirements

**Aligning Forces
for Quality** | Improving Health & Health Care
in Communities Across America



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.