1 Introducing the CAHPS 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit

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1 Introducing the CAHPS 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit

Introduction

Today's complex and competitive health care environment has generated unprecedented demand for tools and information to document the characteristics of and differences among health plans and health care delivery systems. Tools and information are needed to help various constituencies become better health decisionmakers. For example, when choosing among health plans, consumers need information about quality in health care as well as comparative information about health plans. Such information also assists purchasers to assess the value of the services they buy and helps health plans improve their programs and services.

By measuring and reporting consumer experience with specific aspects of health plans, the components of the ***Consumer Assessment of Health Plans (CAHPS) 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit*** provide reliable and valid tools that sponsors can use to help consumers and purchasers assess and select health plans. The Kit includes a set of appendixes that contain surveys that ask consumers about their experience with their health plans, sample formats for reporting results to consumers, software to assist in data analysis, and guidance and instructions to help organizations carry out the surveys and produce the reports.

CAHPS Sponsorship and Development

In October 1995, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), one of the agencies of the Federal Public Health Service, announced a new initiative to build an integrated set of carefully tested and standardized questionnaires and reporting formats that could be used to collect and report meaningful and reliable information about the experiences of consumers enrolled in health plans. The agency awarded 5-year grants to consortia headed by the Harvard Medical School, Research Triangle Institute, and RAND. These three organizations, along with AHCPR and Westat, worked collaboratively on questionnaire development, reporting product development, and evaluation. The ***CAHPS 1.0 Survey and Reporting Kit*** was published in spring 1998. AHCPR, along with the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) has continued to support and participate in the development of this initiative, and the CAHPS 2.0 Kit is a revised and updated version of the original Kit. ***Brief History on the Development of CAHPS*** appendix on ***CD-ROM 1*** provides a detailed account of the evolution from CAHPS 1.0 to CAHPS 2.0.

A Special Note for CAHPS 1.0 Users

CAHPS 2.0 replaces all CAHPS 1.0 products. If sponsors are still using ***CAHPS 1.0 Survey and Reporting Kit***, they should update to the 2.0 version. ***Brief History on the Development of CAHPS*** appendix on ***CD-ROM 1*** details the changes between the 1.0 and 2.0 versions.

Users of the ***CAHPS 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit***

The ***CAHPS 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit*** reflects the findings and lessons learned from the CAHPS 1.0 demonstration sites and evaluations, feedback from other early sponsors, expert reviews, convergence with the National Committee for Quality Assurance's (NCQA's) Member Satisfaction Survey (see the ***CAHPS Convergence with NCQA's Member Survey*** box), and results of research and testing. The Kit has been designed to be flexible to meet a variety of needs and users. Sponsors and other users typically fall into the following general categories:

Purchasers. Many purchasers, such as individual employers, employer coalitions, purchasing cooperatives, state Medicaid programs, other state government agencies, and consortia, will conduct CAHPS surveys to monitor the quality of the health plans they offer. These survey sponsors are likely to produce and distribute survey reports to consumers during open enrollment periods and other health plan choice opportunities. They may also want to incorporate the CAHPS reports into broad or long-term efforts to inform and educate consumers about the fundamental principles and characteristics of health care delivery systems and about health care quality issues. Sponsors might also find the survey results useful during contract negotiations with their health plans and in programs aimed at encouraging plan improvements in performance.

Government agencies. HCFA uses CAHPS annually to assess the quality of its Medicare managed care plans. The agency is also currently planning CAHPS surveys of its beneficiaries enrolled in fee-for-service health plans and beneficiaries who have left plans, either voluntarily or involuntarily (i.e., because the plan closed enrollment to Medicare beneficiaries or went out of business). The Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Government's human resources agency, uses CAHPS to monitor all the health plans offered to Federal employees and retirees. State agencies may also find the Kit useful in conducting their own surveys, which are often mandated by state legislatures, and in developing legislation.

Quality measurement organizations. Accrediting organizations, state associations of health maintenance organizations and other plans, and other organizations, are all currently using or endorsing CAHPS for their constituencies. The Kit can be used by these organizations as a resource or distributed to their membership or constituencies for mandated or suggested annual or bi-annual surveys of consumer experiences with health care.

Health plans. A health plan may want to compare its own performance with that of its competitors. Or, it may want to compare different markets, different plan products, or combinations of both within its own organizations. Health plans may also actively participate with a specific purchaser or purchasing coalition to conduct a CAHPS project.

Survey vendors and other consultants. Most CAHPS sponsors will work in partnership with a vendor hired to conduct a range of survey-related tasks. Vendors and consultants will rely heavily on the survey and reporting products, specifications, and guidance contained in the appendixes.

CAHPS Convergence with NCQA's Member Satisfaction Survey

One of the most prominent organizations that evaluates and reports on the quality of managed care health plans is the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). It carries out this work both prospectively, through its standards for the accreditation of managed care organizations, and retrospectively, through its Health plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS) health plan quality performance measures. Beginning in 1991, NCQA included in HEDIS a consumer satisfaction survey called the Member Satisfaction Survey.

CAHPS 1.0 and NCQA's Member Satisfaction Survey had several significant differences in content, approach, and protocol requirements. In 1998, therefore, the CAHPS development team and NCQA agreed to converge the two surveys into a common survey that would use superior components from both surveys; incorporate the perspectives and needs of consumers, purchasers, and health plans; and serve the purposes of NCQA and CAHPS sponsors. The result is a single core CAHPS 2.0 survey that performs the following:

- Assesses all health care systems (fee-for-service and managed care);
- Applies across Medicare, commercial, and Medicaid populations;
- Gathers quality improvement information; and
- Enhances comparative information on health care quality.

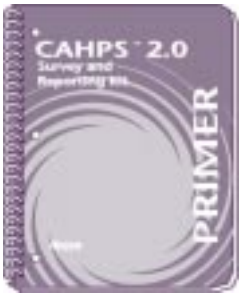
To satisfy NCQA accreditation and HEDIS reporting requirements, health plans use a CAHPS questionnaire that is comprised of the CAHPS core and supplemental items selected by NCQA for inclusion. When used for NCQA accreditation or HEDIS reporting, this survey is referred to as CAHPS 2.0H. ***Chapter 4*** provides further details on the differences between CAHPS 2.0 and 2.0H in the context of its discussion of issues related to sampling, data collection, and data analysis; ***CAHPS 2.0 Surveys*** appendix on ***CD-ROM 3*** also contains further information on these surveys.

For more information about the CAHPS 2.0H survey, contact ***NCQA's Technical Inquiry*** line at **(202) 955-5697.**

The Structure and Contents of the Kit

The CAHPS 2.0 Kit is designed to be easy to use by people with various types of expertise and project responsibilities. The Kit is contained in a binder that includes several components:

1. A **"roadmap"** brochure that describes the Kit and its contents and that provides how-to-use guidance.



2. A spiral-bound **primer** that contains guidance and recommendations on planning and conducting a CAHPS project. This four-chapter primer is organized thematically:
   - Chapter 1 introduces the CAHPS 2.0 Kit.
   - Chapter 2 contains an overview of issues related to planning and design and project management.
   - Chapter 3 reviews the major issues involved in reporting CAHPS results.
   - Chapter 4 covers the major issues involved in selecting a survey sample, conducting the survey, and analyzing the data.

The primer is intended to provide a general overview of the issues and major decisions involved in conducting a survey and reporting the results. It is also intended to give users a better understanding of how CAHPS fits into the current environment of health plan performance evaluation and help sponsors use CAHPS with a variety of audiences. The primer, which appears on CD-ROM 1, frequently refers users to the appendixes, which are included on the CD-ROMs in the Kit.

3. **Three CD-ROMs** that contain all the questionnaires, supplementary materials, and reporting templates that users will need to carry out the survey and report results. They also contain detailed accompanying instructions and technical information. All of the material contained on the CD-ROMs can be downloaded as needed. They are organized as follows:

CD-ROM 1 contains the following:

- The CAHPS 2.0 Survey and Reporting Kit primer;
- Background material (a brief history of the CAHPS initiative; information on the evolution of CAHPS 1.0 to CAHPS 2.0; and an annotated bibliography);

- An ***Overview of the National CAHPS Benchmarking Database*** (NCBD); and
- Material to help sponsors plan, design, and manage their projects (a project planning workbook; a sample request for proposals (RFP) for use in hiring survey or reporting vendors; a table of existing CAHPS sponsors [with a hyperlink to the CAHPS web site for more information about each project]).

CD-ROM 2 contains the following:

- All the reporting templates, instructions for incorporating survey results into the templates, and guidance on creating reporting products.

CD-ROM 3 contains the following:

- CAHPS 2.0 surveys and survey material (sampling guidelines; data collection protocol; questionnaires; data preparation guidelines; data analysis program and instructions).

A list of all appendix titles appears in the table of contents of the primer.

4. A **13-minute video**, entitled "Understanding Your Health Plan Choices," which sponsors can use to provide consumers with basic information about CAHPS. It helps consumers understand the importance of quality as a factor in decisionmaking and how they can use CAHPS results when choosing a health plan. This video is intended to be used for those in commercial plans in concert with the CAHPS reporting products and promotional materials.

5. A **sample of the CAHPS print guide** *Compare Your Health Plan Choices.*

Getting Technical Assistance from the Survey Users Network (SUN)

For more information about these products, contact the ***CAHPS SUN Help Line*** at **(800) 492-9261**.

As additional CAHPS products are developed, they will be distributed to users through SUN. The following are the forthcoming products and anticipated release schedule:

Surveys

- Medicare Disenrollee Survey (Fall 1999)
- Chronic Conditions Survey for Adults and Children (Early 2000)
- Medicaid SSI for Adults and Children Survey (Early 2000)
- Medicare Fee-for-Service Survey (Early 2000)
- Spanish-CAHPS (Fall 2000)

Reports

- Limited English-CAHPS (Fall 2000)

Provider Services-CAHPS

A version of CAHPS, developed for use with physician groups and clinic systems and called Provider Services-CAHPS, has been sponsored by the Quality Measurement Advisory Service (QMAS) in conjunction with Harvard University and RAND. It is available through SUN.

Using the CAHPS Name and Trademark Issues

The ***CAHPS 2.0*** Kit is based on the CAHPS protocol, a rigorously tested set of recommendations that sponsors are strongly encouraged to follow. These recommendations cover specific aspects of designing, conducting, and reporting on CAHPS surveys and are discussed throughout the Kit, particularly in the appendixes.

The CAHPS products that embody this protocol were designed using a set of principles (see ***Chapter 3*** for an extensive discussion of these principles). The products have been tested with consumers, reviewed by stakeholders, and revised over time.[1] As a result, the acronym for the study that produced the products (Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study, CAHPS) is trademarked. In using the Kit and its products, we expect sponsors to:

- Follow the design principles presented here;
- Follow the recommended protocol for conducting the survey and reporting the results; and
- Include "™" when using the acronym (CAHPS).

Participation in Networks of Users and Sponsors

We encourage users to take advantage of three AHCPR-funded resources while they plan for, carry out, and learn from their CAHPS project—the Survey Users Network (SUN), Community-based Technical Assistance, and the National CAHPS Benchmarking Database (NCBD).

The ***Survey Users Network*** is a technical assistance and information sharing network. Once sponsors are registered as CAHPS users, they can become active participants of SUN. SUN provides assistance on technical aspects of CAHPS through orientation meetings, conferences, regular consultation with sponsors, distribution of information about CAHPS products, a telephone help line, and the SUN web site. SUN will also distribute all new CAHPS products and interim materials and can provide information about current studies underway through the CAHPS development team. SUN is coordinated and managed by Westat as part of its role as the CAHPS technical assistance contractor.

SUN also provides sponsors with valuable networking information and resources. It can supply extensive information about how diverse sponsors have carried out their projects and solved specific problems. SUN can also help sponsors get accurate and up-to-date information about regulatory and accreditation requirements through its contacts with HCFA and quality monitoring organizations.

[1] Weinberger, M. (Ed.). (1999). Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study (CAHPS). *Medical Care*, 37(3), Supplement.

Getting Technical Assistance from SUN

To register for ***SUN*** support, including access to the web site, contact the ***SUN Help Line*** at **(800) 492-9261**.

Community-based Technical Assistance helps state, regional, and local health care coalitions, purchasing groups, and health information organizations measure health care quality for value-based purchasing and other purposes. It provides services and tools to assist purchasing groups and other sponsors within and across local and regional markets to develop and carry out coordinated quality measurement strategies based on the emerging array of national standardized measures, including CAHPS, HEDIS, (Healthplan Employer Data and Information Set), Foundation for Accountability (FACCT), ORYX, American Medical Accreditation Program (AMAP), and others. These services and tools include the following:

- Direct sponsor assistance, including strategic planning, project organizing, and technical assistance (such as sampling consultation and report design);
- Information exchange through guidebooks that emphasize best practices of community-based organizing, measurement and reporting techniques, and products.

Community-based Technical Assistance is provided by QMAS through a partnership with Westat.

Information About Community-based Technical Assistance

For more information call Dale Shaller, Program Director, ***QMAS,*** at **(651) 430-0759** or the ***SUN Help Line*** at **(800) 492-9261**.

The **National CAHPS Benchmarking Database** contains data from participating sponsors. It was established to facilitate comparisons of CAHPS results among different sponsors, including Medicaid agencies, public and private employers, and individual health plans. These data provide a valuable benchmark that can be used by purchasers and health plans to evaluate and improve plan performance. The NCBD also is an important source of primary data for conducting research on survey design and health plan and enrollee characteristics that influence performance.

The NCBD provides participating sponsors with reports that compare their own survey results to appropriate benchmarks derived from the NCBD. They will also have access to data about their own survey. In addition, sponsors may obtain customized analyses and reports on a fee-for-service basis. With specific authorization, sponsors and researchers may also access other sponsor-specific data files or aggregate or specialized subsets of the NCBD data files.

The NCBD was initially implemented by QMAS and The Picker Institute. The NCBD is now administered by Westat (in partnership with QMAS and The Picker Institute). It was established in 1998 with a grant by the John Hartford Foundation. By 1999, with continuing support from AHCPR, the NCBD had expanded to include a broad range of participants, including five Medicaid agencies, three state agency employers, two employer coalitions, one private employer, one state department of health, and one health plan. The phase I survey response database contains data on 86 health plans: 31 Medicaid plans, 53 commercial managed care plans, and 2 indemnity plans.

Information About the National CAHPS Benchmarking Database (NCBD)

For more information call Dale Shaller, Program Director, **QMAS** at **(651) 430-0759** or the ***SUN Help Line*** at **(800) 492-9261**.

Using CAHPS in Other Contexts. As one of the emerging national standards for health care quality measurement, CAHPS is currently being used in a variety of contexts to answer the demand for health care quality information and tools. For example, CAHPS data can be used in a variety of quality measurement reporting frameworks, such as those developed by the NCQA and the American Accreditation Healthcare Commission/URAC.

Selected portions of the CAHPS core questionnaire also are being used by other organizations for their own survey purposes. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has incorporated portions of the CAHPS core questionnaire into its Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. The U.S. Department of Defense has also used portions of the core questionnaire in its surveys of the health care experience of military families.