

Medicare CAHPS Fact Sheet

Overview

Consumer evaluations of health care and prescription drug services measure important aspects of a patient's experience that cannot be assessed by other means. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is committed to measuring and reporting information from the consumer perspective for Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS), Medicare Advantage (MA), and Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) contracts. The Medicare Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS[®]) surveys provide information on the quality of health services provided through the MA and Medicare Part D programs and in comparison to FFS. The surveys collect information to fulfill a requirement of Congress (under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003).

Medicare CAHPS Development, Testing, and Endorsement

The surveys have been rigorously developed and tested to assess the experiences of people with Medicare who receive health and drug services through the MA, PDP, and/or FFS programs. Researchers from a variety of organizations including the American Institutes for Research, Harvard Medical School, the RAND Corporation, and RTI International have contributed to the development of a family of CAHPS surveys under a cooperative agreement between CMS and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), components of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the CAHPS Program, please go to cms.gov/CAHPS.

Data Collection Overview

Since 1998, CMS has conducted the MA CAHPS surveys annually with a sample of people with Medicare at least 18 years of age, currently enrolled in an MA contract for six months or longer, and who live in the U.S. and U.S. territories. Surveys of people enrolled in FFS were added in 2000, and surveys of PDP enrollees were added in 2007. CMS requires all MA and PDP contracts with at least 600 eligible enrollees to contract with CMS-approved survey vendors to collect CAHPS survey data following specific protocols established by CMS. The MA & PDP CAHPS surveys are conducted at the contract level for MA-Only contracts, Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MA-PD) contracts, and PDP contracts. CMS provides the annual sample for each contract to the approved MA & PDP CAHPS Survey vendor authorized by each contract. The survey instruments are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Medicare CAHPS Public Reporting and Use of the Medicare CAHPS Survey Data

The Medicare CAHPS surveys produce data on the patient's experience of care that allow objective and meaningful comparisons between MA and PDP contracts, as well as with FFS, on domains that are important to consumers. Results are publicly available on the Medicare Plan Finder website ([medicare.gov/plan-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare)). Public reporting of the survey results is designed to incentivize contracts to improve their quality of care and to increase the transparency of the quality of care provided by Medicare contracts to enrollees. The measures derived from the surveys are used by enrollees to help make enrollment decisions, by contracts to help identify areas for quality improvement, and to allow the public and research community to assess Medicare program performance. Several of the CAHPS measures are included in the Part C and D Star Ratings Program, which for MA contracts is the basis for determining Quality Bonus Payments. Medicare administrators and policymakers also rely on the data to manage the program; develop, implement, and evaluate quality improvement efforts; and make policy decisions.

MA & PDP CAHPS Measures/Content and Survey Administration

There are three versions of the MA & PDP CAHPS surveys; although all three versions have questions in common, each also includes additional questions and response categories related to enrollees' experiences with the particular contract type.

- The MA-Only survey covers the following domains: Your Health Care in the Last 6 Months, Your Personal Doctor, Getting Health Care from Specialists, Your Health Plan, and About You.
- The MA-PD survey covers the following domains: Your Health Care in the Last 6 Months, Your Personal Doctor, Getting Health Care from Specialists, Your Health Plan, Your Prescription Drug Plan, and About You.
- The PDP survey covers the following domains: Your Prescription Drug Plan and About You.

Many of the items in the MA & PDP CAHPS surveys are preceded by screener questions, so that only those individuals for whom the item is relevant are asked to answer those questions. For scoring and reporting purposes, some questions are combined into publicly reported MA & PDP CAHPS Survey measures, which include composites, global ratings, and individual items, as well as other measures reported to contracts.

Composite measures:

- Getting Needed Care
- Getting Appointments and Care Quickly
- Doctors Who Communicate Well (reported to contracts – not reported to consumers)
- Customer Service
- Getting Needed Prescription Drugs (MA-PD and PDP)
- Care Coordination

In 2024, the Getting Appointments and Care Quickly measure was shortened from three items to two items.

- Patient got urgent care as soon as needed
- Patient got an appointment for a check-up or routine care as soon as needed

In addition to the publicly reported composite measures, the surveys include several publicly reported “member overall” ratings based on a 0-10 scale, where 0 is the lowest rating and 10 is the highest:

- Rating of Health Plan
- Rating of Health Care Quality
- Rating of Drug Plan (MA-PD and PDP)

The MA-Only and MA-PD surveys also include the following single item measures, which are publicly reported:

- Annual Flu Vaccine
- Pneumonia Vaccine (reported to contracts – not reported to consumers)

Other measures reported to contracts include:

- Patient visit began within 15 minutes of appointment time (MA-Only and MA-PD)
- Patient was treated in an unfair or insensitive way (MA-Only and MA-PD)
- Reminders to fill prescriptions (MA-PD and PDP)
- Reminders to take medications (MA-PD and PDP)

The MA & PDP CAHPS surveys are administered using a web-mail-phone data collection protocol that includes emailed or mailed invitations to complete a web survey, up to two survey mailings for non-respondents to the web survey, and phone follow-up with non-respondents to the web and mail survey administration. Prior to 2024, the surveys were administered using a mail-phone mode data collection protocol. CMS pilot testing of a web-based survey component in 2022 found that a web-mail-phone protocol resulted in higher response rates than a mail-phone protocol.

The surveys are available on the MA & PDP CAHPS Survey website: <https://ma-pdpcahps.org/en/current-data-collection-materials/>.

Survey Vendor Participation

Survey vendors must apply for approval to participate in MA & PDP CAHPS on an annual basis. The annual approval process includes submission of a Participation Form to the MA & PDP CAHPS Project Team, fulfilling Minimum Business Requirements for MA & PDP CAHPS, and compliance with the protocols in the MA & PDP CAHPS Quality Assurance Protocols & Technical Specifications manual. In addition, survey vendors must participate in MA & PDP CAHPS Survey vendor training and successfully complete a Post Training Quiz.

For More Information

To learn more about the MA & PDP CAHPS surveys, including background information, policy updates, survey administration protocols and procedures, training opportunities, and how to participate in the survey, please visit the MA & PDP CAHPS website at MA-PDPCAHPS.org.

To Provide Comments or Ask Questions

For information and technical assistance, contact the MA & PDP CAHPS Project Team via email at MA-PDPCAHPS@hsag.com or by calling toll free at 1-877-735-8882. To communicate with CMS staff, please email: MP-CAHPS@cms.hhs.gov.