



THE CAHPS HEALTH PLAN DATABASE

Overview of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database

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1. ABOUT THE CAHPS® SURVEY

CAHPS refers to a comprehensive and evolving family of surveys that ask consumers and patients to evaluate the interpersonal aspects of health care. The term “CAHPS” initially stood for the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study, but as the products have evolved beyond health plans, the acronym now stands for “Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems”.

CAHPS surveys probe those aspects of care for which consumers and patients are the best and/or only source of information, as well as those that consumers and patients have identified as being important. By responding to a standardized set of questions administered through a mail or telephone questionnaire, consumers report on their experiences and rate their health plans, hospitals and providers in several areas. CAHPS surveys are administered to a random sample of consumers or patients by independent survey vendors following standardized procedures.

The development of CAHPS has been and continues to be a collaborative effort of public and private research organizations. The CAHPS program is funded and managed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ; see www.ahrq.gov). AHRQ works closely with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS; see www.cms.gov), which has been a major partner in this initiative since 1996. Both of these agencies are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The CAHPS Health Plan surveys are designed for use with all types of health insurance enrollees (Medicaid, CHIP, and Medicare) and across the full range of health care delivery systems from fee-for-service to managed care plans. A core survey questionnaire is available for adults concerning their own experiences and for parents concerning the experiences of their children. Supplemental questions have been developed as modules for people with chronic conditions and special health care needs.

AHRQ provides the CAHPS Health Plan Survey and Reporting Kit to all interested users through the CAHPS User Network. The Kit provides everything required to field the survey and report the results and includes survey questionnaires, a data analysis program and report templates. Further information and technical assistance are also available from the User Network, which can be reached through www.cahps.ahrq.gov or through the helpline at 1-800-492-9261.

2. ABOUT THE CAHPS HEALTH PLAN SURVEY DATABASE

The CAHPS Database (the CAHPS Database) is the repository for data from the CAHPS family of surveys. The primary purpose of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database is to facilitate comparisons of CAHPS health Plan survey results by and among survey participants. This voluntary compilation of health plan survey results from a large pool of data into a single database enables participants to compare their own results to certain overall reference points (i.e., such as regional and product-type averages). The CAHPS Database also offers an important

source of primary data for research related to consumer assessments of quality as measured by CAHPS surveys.

The CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database currently contains data since 1998 from over 7 million respondents sampled from enrollees in commercial, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Medicare Managed Care health plans.

The users of the Health Plan Survey Database can view cross-sector comparisons of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey results for Medicaid (adult and child), CHIP (child), and Medicare (adult) populations for the two most recent years on the online reporting system.

Also, the online reporting system allows users to:

- View frequencies (one-way or two-way) for individual survey items.
- View results for composite, ratings or individual survey items as bar charts or in tabular form.
- Create a custom report with the report builder feature.

The Medicaid and CHIP Participants in the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database are required to submit their survey data according to specified guidelines. In return, they are able to access a private feedback report in excel that displays their own results compared to the overall database average.

The CAHPS Database aggregates respondent-level data files across participants and health plans for the Medicaid, and CHIP populations. Researchers may gain access to data needed to help answer important health services research questions related to consumer assessments of quality.

In addition, the CAHPS Database provides data used by policymakers and others through such publications as the AHRQ National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports.

Administration of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database

The CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database is sponsored and funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and administered by Westat. Oversight and direction for the project are provided by an Advisory Group composed of representatives of survey sponsors from the public and private sectors as well as members of the CAHPS Consortium. Further information about the CAHPS Database is available through the Web site at (<https://www.cahpsdatabase.ahrq.gov>).

Use of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database for Research

Researchers may gain authorized access to data from the CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database to help answer important health services research questions related to consumer assessments of quality as measured by CAHPS. CAHPS Health Plan Survey data are available for researchers

who submit an application and sign a data release agreement that ensures the confidentiality of the data.

Custom Analyses and Reports

The CAHPS Health Plan Survey Database staff is available to conduct specialized data analyses and reports upon request. All analyses and reports will adhere to data policies regarding confidentiality of respondents, plans and participants.