

# **CAHPS Surveys at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**

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# CMS Efforts to Increase Response Rates

- CMS publicly reports the results of CAHPS surveys on medicare.gov to inform decisions around choosing providers and plans.
- Many of the CAHPS surveys impact payments to CMS providers
  - ▶ Annual payment update
  - ▶ Value-based purchasing



# CMS Efforts to Increase Response Rates

- CMS is considering multiple ways to help increase response rates across the CAHPS surveys.
  - ▶ Shortening the length of surveys
  - ▶ Adding web mode to survey administration protocols
  - ▶ Encouraging providers to choose survey administration mode based on population served
  - ▶ Creating cover letters, CATI scripts, and promotional materials to engage and inform potential respondents about the survey
  - ▶ Conducting the survey in the preferred language

# Shortening Surveys

- Where we can, we are testing shorter versions on select CAHPS surveys.
  - ▶ Home Health CAHPS
  - ▶ In-Center Hemodialysis CAHPS
  - ▶ Hospice CAHPS

# Adding Web Mode of Survey Administration

- Implementing web as an addition to mail, phone, or mail-phone across multiple CAHPS Surveys.
  - ▶ Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery (OAS) CAHPS
  - ▶ Medicare Advantage (MA) and Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) CAHPS
  - ▶ Hospital CAHPS
- Additional settings where web testing is complete.
  - ▶ CAHPS Hospice Survey
  - ▶ In-Center Hemodialysis CAHPS
  - ▶ Home Health CAHPS

# Encouraging Providers to Select Mode of Survey Administration Based on their Population

- There are differences in response rates by mode and race/ethnicity.
- Example of ICH CAHPS response rates by race/ethnicity.

Race/Ethnicity	2023 Spring Response Rate		
	Mail-only	Phone-only	Mixed Mode
American Indian/Native Alaskan	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	20.3%
Asian	18.9%	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>22.1%</b>
Black	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	23.5%
Hispanic	<b>11.3%</b>	23.8%	<b>24.9%</b>
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	9.3%	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>23.6%</b>
White	27.9%	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>

- CMS encourages providers to choose the mode taking into consideration their population served.

# Prenotification and Cover Letters

- Research was conducted in 2019 and focused on ways to improve survey response rates by improving survey cover letters and envelopes.



# More Engaging Prenotification and Cover Letters

## What worked

- Use of bold text, white space, and call-out boxes.
- Use friendlier language and less text.
- Personalize letters.
- Note participation is voluntary.
- Include language regarding information will be kept private by law.
- Explain results are publicly reported.
- Say participation is “greatly appreciated.”
- Highlight “your voice is important.”

## What didn't work

- Use of font size smaller than Times New Roman 12 pt.
- Use of large blocks of text with no special formatting.
- Focus on things that matter primarily to survey researchers.
- Use of language such as “Your Medicare benefits will not be affected.”
- No link about how survey results can help others choose a facility or plan.
- Use of language that says this is your “last chance” [to participate].
- Not clearly specifying what organization is being contacted for the toll-free number listed in the letter.



# Qualitative Testing to Support Telephone Interviewing

- Qualitative testing was conducted in 2023 to explore ways to modify CATI scripts to help increase survey participation.
- CMS is reviewing the findings to update, as needed, recommendations around Caller IDs and CATI script introductions.

# Caller ID Recommendations

- Use Caller ID display to quickly establish legitimacy and relevancy.
- Avoid references to “surveys” in the Caller ID.
- Always display a phone number.
- Use a local number if possible.
- Avoid phone numbers that are likely to be perceived as spam.
- Provide a number that can be called back or validated online.

# CATI Script Recommendations

- Shorten CATI scripts as much as possible.
- Include a purpose statement for each survey.
- Personalize the introduction.
- Ensure interviewers are trained to promote a positive interview experience.
- Express appreciation.
- Directly ask participants for help.

# Promotional Material

- Encourage providers and plans to let their patients or members know that they may receive a survey.
- Facilities can hang posters containing information about the survey.

# Example of a Poster to Encourage Participation

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) wants to hear  
from you:

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Our facility is participating in a national study for patients receiving in-center hemodialysis care. If you receive a survey in the mail or a phone call from [INSERT VENDOR NAME], we ask that you please take a moment to complete the survey about the care you receive from us, even if you completed the survey several months ago.

### YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!

Your participation is voluntary, and your information is kept private by law. No one will be able to connect your answers to your name. **Your answers will help us improve your care!**

If you have questions about this survey, please call our survey vendor, [VENDOR NAME], at [VENDOR PHONE NUMBER].

*Thank you in advance for your participation in  
this important survey!*

[INSERT  
FACILITY  
LOGO HERE]

**FOR OFFICIAL ICH CAHPS  
USE ONLY:**  
CMS LOGO INSERTED HERE

# Language Preference

- CMS is committed to making translations of the CAHPS surveys available for use in CMS programs.
- There are a variety of translations that are currently available and optional for plans and providers to use.
- For some CMS CAHPS Surveys, we currently require the administration of the survey in Spanish.
- We encourage all providers and plans to collect language preference information and administer the survey in the preferred language when available.