

# What's Available for the CAHPS® Health Plan Surveys

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## What Materials Are Available?

The *CAHPS Health Plan Surveys and Instructions* (<https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/Get-Surveys-and-Instructions.aspx>) are intended to support users in implementing a CAHPS Health Plan Survey. The following materials are available:

- The surveys for adults and children enrolled in commercial and Medicaid plans (versions 4.0 and 5.0)
- Supplemental items that you can add to your survey (versions 4.0 and 5.0 (currently under review))
- Guidance on preparing a survey that meets your needs
- Guidance on administering the survey
- Guidance on preparing the survey data for analysis
- SAS®-based analysis programs and instructions for analyzing survey results
- Guidance on reporting survey results

When the CAHPS Database is open for submission for Health Plan Survey results, it will accept both the 4.0 and 5.0 versions. If you are planning to submit the survey results to the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), please contact NCQA to determine which version(s) they will accept.

## Questionnaires

The CAHPS Health Plan Surveys ask adult enrollees and parents of children enrolled in commercial and Medicaid plans to report on and rate their experiences with the health plan. Several versions of the survey are currently available in both English and Spanish:

- Adult Commercial Survey 4.0 and 5.0
- Child Commercial Survey 4.0 and 5.0
- Adult Medicaid Survey 4.0 and 5.0
- Child Medicaid Survey 4.0 and 5.0

Each questionnaire consists of a standard set of core items that must be administered. Survey users can also incorporate optional supplemental items to capture information about enrollees' experiences in specific areas.

When you download any of these questionnaires, you also receive *CAHPS Health Plan Surveys: Overview of the Questionnaires* (Document No. 2150), which describes each questionnaire in greater detail. This document also explains what's different about the 5.0 version of the survey instruments.

To learn more about the Health Plan Surveys, visit <http://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/About-HP.aspx>.

## Supplemental Items

Supplemental items that may be added to the surveys for adults and children are available in both English and Spanish. The extensive list of supplemental items includes a few sets of items that were developed and tested together to address specific aspects of enrollees' experiences with care. You can download the following documents that describe the development, content, and use of the item sets:

- ***About the Item Set for People with Mobility Impairments*** (Document No. 1110) – [https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/~media/Files/SurveyDocuments/HP/Medicaid/Get\\_Surveys/1110\\_PWMI\\_Description\\_2008.pdf](https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/~media/Files/SurveyDocuments/HP/Medicaid/Get_Surveys/1110_PWMI_Description_2008.pdf)
- ***About the Item Set for Children with Chronic Conditions*** (Document No. 102) – [https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/~media/Files/SurveyDocuments/HP/Commercial/Get\\_Surveys/102\\_Children\\_with\\_Chronic\\_Conditions\\_Set\\_2008.pdf](https://www.cahps.ahrq.gov/Surveys-Guidance/HP/~media/Files/SurveyDocuments/HP/Commercial/Get_Surveys/102_Children_with_Chronic_Conditions_Set_2008.pdf). Unlike other supplemental items, this item set is integrated into the Child Medicaid Questionnaire.

## Survey Administration Guidelines

A number of documents are available to help guide you through the survey administration process:

- ***Preparing a Questionnaire Using the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 4.0*** (Document No. 1012) explains how to prepare a questionnaire that meets your needs by adding supplemental items to the core instrument. It also discusses the formatting of the questionnaire and provides information on translating the questionnaire into a foreign language. The instructions apply to both the 4.0 and 5.0 versions, but this document has not yet been updated to include references to the 5.0 version of the surveys.
- ***Fielding the CAHPS Health Plan Survey*** provides guidelines and protocols for constructing a sample frame, selecting the sample, administering the questionnaire, collecting data, calculating response rates, and preparing the data to be analyzed. There are two variations on these instructions: one for the Medicaid instrument and the other for the commercial instrument. The instructions apply to both the 4.0 and 5.0 versions, but neither document has been updated to include references to the 5.0 version of the surveys.
  - ***Fielding the CAHPS Health Plan Survey – Medicaid Plans*** (Document No. 13a)
  - ***Fielding the CAHPS Health Plan Survey – Commercial Plans*** (Document No. 13b)

Both documents offer strategies for surveying adults and children.

The *Health Plan Surveys and Instructions* also include sample documents that you may adapt to your project as needed:

- *Sample Notification Letters for the CAHPS Health Plan Survey* (Document No. 161, includes both English and Spanish letters)
- *Sample Telephone Script for the CAHPS Health Plan Survey* (Document No. 162, includes both English and Spanish scripts)  
The sample script has not been updated to include the 5.0 version.

**Important note to survey sponsors:** The usefulness of a CAHPS Health Plan Survey as a tool for comparing and assessing health plan products depends on your fidelity to the guidelines presented in these documents. In order to compare your results to those of other survey sponsors, and to report comparative information based on the data from the questionnaire, it is critical that you follow the guidelines as closely as possible. If you must deviate from these guidelines, please first consult with the CAHPS User Network by e-mail ([cahps1@ahrq.gov](mailto:cahps1@ahrq.gov)) or telephone (1-800-492-9261).

### Data Analysis Programs and Guidelines

The *CAHPS Health Plan Surveys and Instructions* include a set of 10 SAS files which comprise the CAHPS Analysis Program, also known as the CAHPS macro, as well as instructions for using the program. The analysis program allows users to analyze and statistically adjust the survey data to make valid comparisons of performance across health plans.

The CAHPS Consortium updates the macro occasionally to address issues raised by users. Before you use the macro to analyze survey results, please check the *Health Plan Surveys and Instructions* to confirm that you have the most recent version.

The following documents can help you use the macro:

- *Instructions for Analyzing Data from the CAHPS Survey* (Document No. 2015) explains how to use the CAHPS macro to analyze the survey data for reporting purposes. It discusses how the analysis programs work and how CAHPS survey sponsors and vendors can use the programs to interpret the results of their survey. Since these instructions are generic, in that they have been written to be useful for all CAHPS surveys, please refer to the survey-specific instructions for additional guidance on how to apply the macro to the 4.0 and 5.0 versions of the Health Plan Survey.
- *Survey-Specific Instructions for Analyzing Results from the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 4.0* (Document No. 1015) offers guidance on adjusting the CAHPS macro so that it can be used specifically to analyze data from the Health Plan Survey. These instructions apply to both the 4.0 and 5.0 versions.

## Reporting Measures

*Reporting Measures for the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 4.0* (Document No. 1108) describes the reporting measures for the surveys, which include global ratings (e.g., a rating of the health plan on a scale of 0 to 10) and composite measures, which summarize performance on two or more survey items. Tables in the appendix show which items are included in each of the composite measures. These measures also apply to the 5.0 version of the surveys.

## For More Information

The CAHPS Web site offers descriptive information on the history, development, status, and use of the CAHPS Health Plan Surveys, including the supplemental item sets. Visitors also have access to –

- comparative data for this survey
- frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- relevant presentations (such as Webcasts and podcasts)
- guidance related to improving patients' experiences with care and reporting survey results to consumers

Visit the CAHPS site at <http://www.cahps.ahrq.gov>.