
Improving Patient Experience of Care

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) developed the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys to advance the scientific understanding of patient experience with healthcare access and quality. CMS uses CAHPS as the core of its Medicare Advantage and Qualified Health Plan patient experience surveys.

The surveys ask patients to report on their experience with a range of healthcare services at multiple levels of the delivery system. They include questions about patients' experience with their providers and about care received for specific conditions. They also ask about enrollees' experience with their health plans and related programs. Survey topics include:

- Access to care
- How well physicians communicate
- Shared decision making
- Health promotion and education
- Coordination of care
- HEDIS measures (flu shots, tobacco cessation)
- Customer service
- Claim processing
- Plan administration and information on costs
- Ratings of healthcare, physicians, specialists, and health plans
- Cultural competence

For more information about the QHP-EES, visit the [CMS website](#).

For more information about CAHPS surveys, visit the AHRQ website: cahps.ahrq.gov.

Expectations for providers

- Become familiar with patient experience survey questions relevant to providers (see sample questions on the next page).
- Implement protocols and practices that support a positive patient experience, as defined by the survey questions about access to care, coordination of care, and customer service.
- Continue improvement in physician-patient communication.
- Engage patients in the process of shared decision making to encourage them to take ownership of their health and treatment plans.

Patient Experience – Sample Survey Questions

The following questions are examples from the 2024 patient experience surveys sent to a random sample of AZ Blue members. A few survey questions are answered with yes or no, but most are answered by a simple rating based on frequency:

Never Sometimes Usually Always

Access to care

- How often did you get an appointment to see a specialist as soon as you needed?
- How often was it easy to get the care, tests, or treatment you needed?
- When you needed care right away, how often did you get care as soon as you needed?
- How often did you get an appointment for a checkup or routine care at a doctor's office or clinic as soon as you needed?

Doctor communication

- How often did your personal doctor explain things in a way that was easy to understand?
- How often did your personal doctor listen carefully to you?
- How often did your personal doctor show respect for what you had to say?
- How often did your personal doctor spend enough time with you?

Coordination of care

- How often did your personal doctor seem informed and up to date about the care you got from (these) doctors and other health providers?
- When your personal doctor ordered a blood test, X-ray, or other test for you, how often did someone from your personal doctor's office follow up to give you those results?
- When your personal doctor ordered a blood test, X-ray, or other test for you, how often did you get those results as soon as you needed them?
- How often did you and your personal doctor talk about all the prescription medicines you were taking?
- How often did you get the help that you needed from your personal doctor's office to manage your care among these different providers and services?

HEDIS measures

- [For smokers] How often were you advised to quit smoking or using tobacco by a doctor or other health provider in your plan?
- [For smokers] How often was medication recommended or discussed by a doctor or health provider to assist you with quitting smoking or using tobacco? Examples of medication are nicotine gum, patch, nasal spray, inhaler, or prescription medication.
- [For smokers] How often did your doctor or health provider discuss or provide methods and strategies other than medication to assist you with quitting smoking or using tobacco? Examples of methods and strategies are telephone helpline, individual or group counseling, or cessation program.