

What you should know about CAHPS and HOS quality measures



The Medicare **Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®)** program is a multiyear survey administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to assess patients' experiences with health care. These surveys focus on aspects of quality that patients are best qualified to assess, such as the communication skills of physicians and practitioners and the ease of access to health care services.

CMS selects a random sample of health plan members from eligible Medicare Advantage (MA) contracts to participate in the CAHPS program each year. The surveys are administered between March and June, beginning with surveys distributed by mail and concluding with telephone-assisted surveys for participants who have not responded.

More details on the CAHPS survey and how it applies to Medicare Advantage plans can be found at MA-PDPCAHPS.org.

The **Health Outcomes Survey (HOS)** assesses the ability of an MA organization to maintain or improve the physical and mental health of its members over time. A random sample of health plan members is selected from eligible MA contracts to participate in the HOS program each year. The surveys are administered between April and July, beginning with surveys distributed by mail and concluding with telephone-assisted surveys for participants who have not responded.

More details about HOS measures can be found at hosonline.org

CAHPS and HOS ratings account for more than a quarter of overall CMS Star quality ratings. That is not the only reason Humana cares. When these quality ratings improve, it is an indicator that your Humana-covered patients are enjoying healthier, happier and more productive lives. So, please read through this brief guide on CAHPS and HOS.

Physicians drive performance on the following important CAHPS and HOS quality measures. You will find impactful talking points and advice beneath each measure.

Annual flu vaccine and pneumonia vaccine: Percent of sampled patients who received an influenza vaccination since the prior July and the percent of sampled patients who reported ever having received a pneumococcal vaccine.

- Some studies have found the number of flu complications is often under-reported, and that as many as 592,000 people were hospitalized and 39,000 died from flu-related complications annually since 2010. ^{1,2}
- Ask patients if they received flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Obtaining needed care: Patients rate how often it was easy to get appointments with specialists and how often it was easy to get the care, tests or treatment they needed through their health plan in the prior six months.

- Make scheduling as easy as possible. Ask staff to schedule specialist appointments and write down the details for your patients.

Getting appointments and care quickly: Patients rate how often they were able to schedule an appointment and get care as soon as needed in the previous six months. Patients also rate how often they saw the person they came to see within 15 minutes of their appointment time.

- Break up wait times by moving patients from the waiting room into an exam room to take vitals.
- Contact your patients when delays are expected using telephone, text or email.
- Advise patients of the best days or times to schedule appointments.



Improving or maintaining physical health: Patients report whether their physical health is the same or better than expected in the past two years.

- Applaud your patients' physical health when possible, and encourage them to stay positive.

Improving or maintaining mental health: Patients report whether their mental health is the same or better than expected in the past two years.

- Ask about your patients' mental health. Simple recommendations, such as increased social activity, exercise and healthy eating, can have a big impact on a patient's sense of emotional well-being.

Monitoring physical activity: Patients report whether they have discussed exercise with their doctor and if they were advised to start, increase or maintain their physical activity level during the year.

- Strengthen recommendations by being specific. For example, suggest walking at a particular local park or shopping mall so patients have a specific, actionable idea.

Improving bladder control: Patients who report having a urine leakage problem are asked whether they have discussed it with their doctor. Those who have are asked whether they received treatment for the problem.

- When you recommend Kegel exercises or other less-conventional remedies, emphasize that you are, in fact, providing treatment so patients will take your recommendations seriously.
- Recommend treatment options no matter the frequency or severity of the bladder control problem.

Reducing the risk of falling: Patients who had a fall or problems with balance and discussed it with their doctor or other health care provider are asked whether they received a fall-risk intervention in the last year.

- Falls are the leading cause of hospital admissions among older adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Remind patients that installing handrails or using a cane can prevent falls.

Overall rating of health care quality: On a 0-to-10 scale, patients rate their health care in the previous six months.

- Ask open-ended questions to give your patients a chance to disclose health issues and concerns.
- A quick explanation for lengthy wait times has been shown to markedly improve patient satisfaction.

Overall rating of plan: On a 0-to-10 scale, patients rate their health plan.

- Remind your Humana-covered patients about possible rewards for obtaining certain preventive services, such as flu vaccines.

Coordination of care composite measure: Patients rate their physicians' familiarity with their medical history and prescriptions, how well physicians are following up with patients after tests and how well "personal doctors" are managing care with specialists or other providers.

- Encourage patients to bring their Humana SmartSummary[®] statement to doctor visits.
- Expedite the time it takes to follow up on blood tests, X-rays and other tests.
- Remind patients to bring a list of their prescriptions.
- Prior to appointments, speak with patients' specialists to review the care they have provided.

Obtaining medications: Patients rate how often in the last six months it was easy to use their health plan to get prescribed medicines; to fill a prescription at a local pharmacy; and to use their health plan to fill prescriptions by mail.

- Please use the formulary, provide 90-day fills, synchronize medications when appropriate, work prior authorizations in a timely manner and set expectations with patients regarding resolution time if a prior authorization is needed. To submit a prior authorization for your patient, call 1-800-555-2546.

Footnotes:

¹ Reed C, et al. 2015. *PLoS One*. 10(3): e0118369

² Foppa I, et al. 2015. *Vaccine*. in Press