

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CAHPS AND HOS QUALITY MEASURES

You can make a difference!

What is CAHPS and HOS?

The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®) program is a multiyear survey initiative to support and promote the assessment of consumers' experiences with health care. These surveys cover topics important to consumers and focus on aspects of quality consumers are best qualified to assess, such as the communication skills of providers and the ease of access to health care services. A random sample of health plan members is selected from eligible Commercial, Medicaid and Medicare Advantage (MA) contracts to participate in the CAHPS program each year. The surveys are administered between February and May, beginning with surveys distributed by mail and concluding with telephone-assisted surveys for participants who have not responded.

The Health Outcomes Survey (HOS) assesses the ability of an MA organization to maintain or improve the physical and mental health of its MA 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.

CAHPS and HOS ratings account for a quarter of overall National Committee of Quality Assurance (NCQA) health plan ranking and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) Star quality ratings. That is not the only reason HNE cares. When these quality ratings improve, it is an indicator that HNE members are enjoying healthier, happier and more productive lives. Everyone deserves to live life fully; so, please take the time to 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 members 18 - 64 who received an influenza vaccination since the prior July and the percent of sampled members 65 and older who reported ever having received a pneumococcal vaccine.

- An estimated 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from flu-related complications annually, according to the American Journal of Medicine.
- Ask patients if they received flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Getting needed care/two-question composite:

Members 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/three-question composite:

Members rate, in the previous six months, how often they were able to schedule an appointment and get care as soon as needed. Members 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, texts or email.
- A quick explanation for lengthy wait times has been shown to markedly improve patient satisfaction.
- Ensure a few appointments each day are available to accommodate urgent visits.
- Maintain an effective triage system to ensure that frail and/or very sick patients are seen right away.
- Offer appointments with a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant to patients who want to be seen on short notice but cannot be seen by their doctor.
- Encourage patients to make their routine appointments for checkups or follow-up visits as soon as they can—weeks or even months in advance.
- Be proactive and call patients months before their tests, screenings, or physicals are due and get them scheduled. Don't wait for the patient to call.

Overall rating of healthcare quality:

On a 0-to-10 scale, members 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.

Overall rating of plan:

On a 0-to-10 scale, members rate their health plan.

Coordination of Care composite measure/six-question composite:

Members 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.

- You probably know all relevant information about your patient's medical history—but does your patient know you know? Make sure they do — it's a quick way to improve patient satisfaction with doctor-patient communication.
- Ask if the patient has seen any other providers—and if you are aware specialty care has occurred, mention it and discuss as needed.
- Tell your patients when they should expect test results ("by the end of next week") and who will give them the results – a staff member, your medical assistant, you?
- Do you let patients know when test results are normal? If not, be sure they know that—but that they can call your office if they still want to check results.

Improving or maintaining physical health:

Members report whether their physical health is the same or better than expected in the past two years.

- HNE wants to improve its members' perceptions of their own physical health. Applaud your patients' physical health when possible, and encourage them to stay positive.
- Have medical assistants assess patient's physical activity level. Review and address the assessment results as needed.
- Utilize appropriate educational materials* and suggest community resources, such as gyms or fitness programs.
- Consider referral to physical therapy so patients with limited mobility can learn safe and effective exercises.

Improving or maintaining mental health:

Members 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 like increased social activity, exercise and healthy eating can have a big impact on a patient's sense of emotional well-being.

Monitoring physical activity:

Members 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:

Members 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 regardless of whether your patients have a big or small bladder control problem.

Reducing the risk of falling:

Members who had a fall or problems with balance and discussed it with their health provider are asked whether they received a fall-risk intervention in the last year.

- Remind patients that installing handrails or using a cane can prevent falls.
- Conduct a Medication Review with patients. Some medications or combinations of medications can have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness, increasing fall risk.
- Consider gradually withdrawing psychotropic medication and modifying other prescriptions, as appropriate, to reduce fall risk.
- Encourage annual eye exams and regular prescription updates for glasses/contact lenses.
- Consider referral to an occupational therapist for home safety evaluation* and modification.
- Encourage exercise, specifically those that increase leg strength and balance.

Please take the time to read and understand how you can guide your patients on CAHPS and HOS measures. Be sure to tell your patients why HNE deserves high scores on these surveys.