

CAHPS: Access to Care 2023

Introduction

The Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) utilizes the CAHPS survey to better understand the patient's perception and evaluation of their providers and health care systems. Year after year, CMS has put more and more emphasis on the CAHPS survey. In addition, the CAHPS survey measures weights have dramatically increased in the overall Medicare Star score and is the single most critical component in the Stars calculation.

Frequency:

- Medicare Advantage & Prescription Drug Plan CAHPS: Annually between Feb. and June
- CAHPS for MIPS (ACO CAHPS): Annually between Oct. and January

Target Population: Medicare Advantage, Commercial and Medicaid members

Measurement Year Look-Back: 6 months for Medicare and Medicaid, 12 months for commercial

Access to Care Survey Questions

Getting Needed Care (GNC):

- How easy was it to get care, tests or treatment you needed?
- How easy was it to get appointments with specialists?

Getting Appointments and Care Quickly (GCQ):

- How often were you able to get care as soon as you needed?
- How often were you able to get appointments for routine care at a doctor's office as soon as you needed?
- How often were you able to see the person you came to see within 15 minutes of your appointment time?

Best Practices

Goal: Positive Patient Experience

- Assist patients with getting care, tests, and treatment from other specialists
- When visiting with a patient, it is helpful to summarize the care given by past providers, recent tests and current status to show an understanding and holistic approach to the patient's care
- Remember to review and discuss all medications the patient is taking, both prescription and OTC
- Test results are important to the patient. Follow and review these results with the patient in a timely manner.
- Schedule routine visits. Ongoing care helps prevent illness and controls chronic conditions.
- Wait times are one of the biggest complaints. Ensure you are consistently monitoring wait times and ensuring the patient is able to see the healthcare provider within that 15 min window.
- Listen attentively. Paraphrase what the patient is saying. Use language from the survey questions.
- Call patients that are waiting in the virtual waiting room to give them status updates of their appointment. Give them a time estimate if the wait is over 30 minutes.
- Train staff members on customer service and how they are the face of the care center for the patients.
Remind them of AIDET:
 - Acknowledge
 - Introduce
 - Duration
 - Explanation
 - Thank You
- Take time to reference the patient satisfaction survey results and try to make improvements.

Appointment Scheduling

- Verbalize the need for timely appointments, procedures and tests to ensure the patient understands expectations. Also take the time to discuss any barriers or constraints as appropriate.
- Offer to schedule those follow up appointments at the end of every patient visit. You want it to be easy for the patient to access care.
- Educate the patients on length of appointments or any reason the appointment may need to be set further out with a specialist.
- Educate patients on telehealth capabilities, PCP vs. Urgent Care vs ED use, and last minute appointment needs
- Give your patients the option to see another healthcare provider if their provider does not have an appointment available on the requested date.

Waiting Room

- Remember, it's the patient's perception of time that will be the source of some of the CAHPS questions. Engage the patients in the waiting room by using some of the following methods:
 - Completion of health screening forms
 - Reading materials
 - Health-related posters and brochures
 - TV

Capacity

- Utilize NPs and PAs to add available appointments
- Keep a schedule blocked during certain parts of each day for walk-ins or last minute appt needs
- Extend office hours to include evenings and weekends
- Offer telehealth visits. You may also ask the patient if assistance is needed to install the app during face to face visits for potential future needs

Familiar Phrases to Use Daily

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- "We understand the importance of getting needed care right away."
- "We want to get you an appointment for your next check-up as soon as you need it."
- "We do offer other virtual visits to help you get care as soon as you need it."
- "We want to make scheduling your appointments for routine care as easy as we can. How may I help?"
- "Thank you for waiting. We do respect your time. If your provider is not in within the next 15 minutes, I will come by and check on you and provide you with an update."

Resources

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