BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

PROVIDER RESOURCE:

CAHPS® Survey

Quality Health Standards – Patient Experience Matters

What is CAHPS? The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey is a standardized instrument for assessing member experience with a range of health care services. Every year between February and May, a third party vendor certified by the National Committee for Quality Assurance surveys our Medicaid members to gain their perspective on quality of health services provided in the last six months.

Patient-experience metrics are becoming a larger part of value based care and shared savings programs. Provider groups are focusing even more on developing a winning patient experience strategy.

Providers hold the key to driving a positive patient experience.

Key CAHPS Themes	Sample Questions	Tips for Success
Access to Care	• How often did you: – Get an appointment to see a specialist as soon as you needed? – Get the care, tests or treatment you needed? – Get care as soon as you needed when you needed care right away? – Get an appointment for a check-up or routine visit as soon as you needed?	• Consider patient workflow improvements to reduce wait times and increase available appointments for needed care. • PCP and office staff: Assist patients in scheduling appointments with specialists. • Follow up with the member's specialists to ensure continuity of care.
Care Coordination	• How often did your doctor seem informed and up to date on the care you got from other doctors or health providers?	• According to surveys, the most important thing providers can do to improve patient perceptions of care coordination is to be informed and up to date about their member care across all settings.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, a Division of Health Care Service Corporation,
a Mutual Legal Reserve Company, an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Key CAHPS Themes	Sample Questions	Tips for Success
Provider Communication	• How often did your personal doctor: – Listen carefully to you? – Show respect for what you had to say? – Spend enough time with you? – Explain things in a way that was easy to understand?	• Ask patients to share concerns at the start of the visit. • Spend enough time with patients and explain things in a way they can understand easily. • Provide patients with educational materials. • At the end of each visit, review treatment plan, discuss medications with your patients and provide reasoning why they should or shouldn't use these medications. Make sure to discuss risks, benefits and alternative options.
Rating of Health Care Quality	Using any number from 0 to 10, what number would you use to rate all your health care?	• Support patients in navigating health care and removing obstacles. Take innovative action to improve access. Examples include: Serve patients quickly, treat urgent issues promptly, minimize wait times and follow up about appointment times and test results. • Schedule annual wellness visits early in the year to get a jump start on evaluating your patients' physical and emotional well-being. • Explore and support alternative telecommunication technologies to expand access to care: telephone, telehealth, telemedicine and patient portals. • Continually assess, revisit and simplify requirements/processes impacting access to care, tests or treatment. Seek opportunities to improve processes and procedures. • Consider performing a preventive health care visit during a sick visit if time and indications allow. • Educate patients about preventive care. They may be eligible to earn a gift card reward for seeing the doctor for preventive care. • Advocate for your patients by becoming familiar with their benefits, drugs and referral policies so you can help them navigate the health care system.

Create a winning CAHPS strategy in your office.

Small changes in your interactions with patients can drive significant improvement in patient experience measures. Below is a helpful checklist on how to implement positive, long-lasting change.

✔	Initiatives	Plan Ideas with Staff	Develop Plan	Train Staff	Document Improvement
	0–3 months • Low level of effort				
☐	Enact a timeliness standard for lab and test follow-ups, even when no additional care is required.				
☐	Set up a protocol for medical record sharing with external providers and facilities.				
☐	Adopt a care team approach to reduce length of time to obtain an appointment with a specific PCP; promote care coordination.				
☐	Communicate beforehand with patients to optimize their visit. Ask patients to write down questions and bring completed forms/insurance card, communicate expected wait times and when to expect follow up.				
☐	Establish an escalation process within the clinic and health plan for timely issue resolution.				
☐	Establish clinic-wide training regarding effective and genuine empathetic communication.				
☐	Include a less than 15-minute wait time as an internal clinic performance metric. Address patient workflow barriers when goals are not met.				
☐	Understand your patients' benefits, drug plan and referral requirements to help them optimize their health care.				
	3–6 months • Moderate level of effort				
☐	Set reminders for patient outreach to schedule preventive services and immunizations.				
☐	Use care alerts to discuss physical/mental health and exercise as well as reminders to ask patients what they would like to discuss.				
☐	Set up a patient advisory committee to help identify and resolve patient pain points.				
☐	Develop a patient navigator program to facilitate care and communication between multiple providers and the health plan.				

▶	6–12 months+ • High level of effort				
✔	Initiatives	Plan Ideas with Staff	Develop Plan	Train Staff	Document Improvement
☐	Add availability for after-hours and weekend appointments.				
☐	Design an online portal for patients to view their medical records/test results, ask questions or obtain general health information.				
☐	Conduct frequent patient satisfaction surveys to identify opportunities for improvement.				
☐	Create personalized patient communication capabilities based on their preferences (i.e., email, text, phone, online portal).				
☐	Implement telehealth/remote consultations for minor health issues.				

Remember to encourage your patients to provide honest feedback. If they receive a survey between February and May, ask them to complete and return it in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. They can also complete the survey online by using the link or QR code provided.

Also refer to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website.

The information in this document is being provided for educational purposes only and is not the provision of medical care or advice. Physicians and other health care providers are instructed to use their own best medical judgment based upon all available information and the condition of the patient in determining the best course of treatment.