



HCAHPS Essentials: June 2009

HCAHPS Alert

In the April issue of Random Samples, HealthStream Research alerted you to the [new CMS guidelines for HCAHPS communication](#). HealthStream Research's HCAHPS experts have been communicating almost daily with CMS, on behalf of clients and non-clients alike, in an effort to determine not only what *isn't* allowed, but what *is* allowed. The following are specific clarifications to items in *HCAHPS Bulletin Number 2009-01*:

1. Inpatients should not be given any survey during their hospital stay or at the time of discharge.

- *By "survey," CMS means a formal, HCAHPS-like, patient experience/satisfaction survey. A formal survey, regardless of the mode employed, is one in which the primary goal is to ask standardized questions of a significant portion of a hospital's patient population.*
- *Non-HCAHPS survey questions should avoid using HCAHPS-like response categories (for instance, "Always," "Usually," "Sometimes," "Never").*
- *It is permissible for patients to be asked about their hospital experience during their hospital stay or during discharge calls where this is a normal part of clinical rounds, leadership rounds, or patient treatment/care activities. However, such questions should not resemble HCAHPS items or their response categories.*
- *The following are examples of the sort of questions that are NOT permissible.*
 - *'Did the nurses always answer your questions?'*
 - *'On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate your hospital stay?'*
 - *'Is there a way we could always have clear communications with you regarding your needs?'*

2. The HCAHPS survey should be administered prior to any other inpatient survey.

- *As noted above, it is permissible for patients to be asked about their hospital experience during their hospital stay when the focus is on the care of the individual patient.*
- *The hospital or its agents must not seek to influence either which patients receive or how patients answer HCAHPS survey items.*

3. The HCAHPS survey *sample* must be drawn prior to administration of any other hospital inpatient survey. Reminder: All discharged hospital inpatients who are eligible for the HCAHPS survey must be included in the HCAHPS *sample frame*.

- *Patient-initiated or hospital-initiated (including the hospital's agents) contact, comment, response or communication, whether before, during or after the hospital stay, must not influence the likelihood of a patient receiving the HCAHPS survey.*

4. Patients who were not randomly selected into the HCAHPS *sample* become eligible to receive a separate survey at any time after the HCAHPS *sample* has been drawn.

If you still have any future concerns that your service recovery policies, discharge processes, survey promotion strategies, or any other type of patient evaluation/interaction may not in compliance with the new CMS guidelines, please send an email to researchinfo@healthstream.com describing your situation and our HCAHPS experts will contact CMS on your (anonymous) behalf.

CMS Releases Home Health Care CAHPS Survey

The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®) Home Health Care Survey, hereafter referred to as the "Home Health Care CAHPS Survey" is designed to measure the experiences of people receiving home health care from Medicare-certified home health agencies. The Home Health Care CAHPS Survey will be conducted for home health agencies by approved Home Health Care CAHPS Survey vendors.

The National Implementation of the Home Health Care CAHPS Survey with Medicare-certified home health care agencies will begin in 2009 with home health agencies that wish to voluntarily participate in the survey. Home health agencies that participate in the national implementation will need to contract with an approved survey vendor to conduct the Home Health Care CAHPS Survey. Approved survey vendors will conduct the Home Health Care CAHPS Survey on an ongoing basis and submit data on a quarterly basis. Home Health Care CAHPS Survey results will be publicly reported on Home Health Compare once an agency has four quarters of data.

HealthStream Research is scheduled to participate in all CMS training and testing around the new Home Health Care CAHPS Survey. CMS is seeking hospitals to participate in modality testing. Please contact HealthStream Research at researchinfo@healthstream.com (or contact your Client Services Manager) if you are interested in participating in the modality testing.

Upcoming Data Submission Deadlines

2009 deadlines for HCAHPS data submission are as follows:

- **July 8, 2009** is the data submission deadline for patients discharged in January, February and March 2009. March 2009 Dry Run data also must be submitted by this date. HealthStream Research is in the process of submitting this data on behalf of our clients.
- **October 14, 2009** is the data submission deadline for patients discharged in April, May and June 2009. June 2009 Dry Run data also must be submitted by this date.

For HCAHPS questions or assistance at HealthStream Research:

Bobbi Rogers

Client Services Consultant at (301) 575-9300

bobbi.rogers@healthstream.com

Briley Price

Client Services Manager at (615) 224-1550

briley.price@healthstream.com