

# ACO CAHPS Communication Guidelines

The Accountable Care Organizations CAHPS (ACO CAHPS) Survey, like all patient surveying, is meant to provide unbiased feedback from your patients about the care they experienced. To help ensure that all ACOs are being rated fairly based on the care they provide, CMS has created guidelines for communicating with Medicare beneficiaries both verbally and in written form about the survey. In addition, CMS has provided guidelines for administering other surveys in conjunction with the ACO CAHPS survey.

The following communication guidelines are included in the ACO CAHPS Quality Assurance Guidelines published by CMS.

## Purpose of the ACO CAHPS Survey

The CAHPS Survey for ACOs is conducted for Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) and Pioneer ACO Model participants to meet their requirement to measure patient experience of care. ACOs are groups of doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers, who come together voluntarily to provide coordinated, high quality care to their Medicare patients.

## Use of ACO CAHPS Survey with Other Surveys

ACOs, survey vendors, or their agents are encouraged not to ask any CAHPS for ACOs Survey questions of beneficiaries with Original Medicare 4 weeks prior to, during and after the CAHPS for ACOs survey administration for quality reporting period 2015 (generally anytime from October 13, 2015 to March 3, 2016).

This restriction doesn't apply to other CMS surveys. For example, HCAHPS surveys will still be administered if an ACO beneficiary has an eligible hospital discharge and is randomly selected to receive the survey.

## Communicating with Beneficiaries about the ACO CAHPS Survey

Survey vendors and ACOs are allowed to notify beneficiaries that they may be asked to participate in the administration of the CAHPS for ACOs Survey. However certain types of promotional communication (either oral, written or in the survey materials, such as cover letters and phone script) are not permitted, since they may introduce bias in the survey results.

ACOs, survey vendors, or their agents are not allowed to:

- Attempt to influence or encourage beneficiaries to answer survey questions in a particular way
- Imply that the ACO, its personnel or agents will be rewarded or gain benefits for positive feedback from beneficiaries by asking beneficiaries to choose certain responses or indicate that the ACO is hoping for a given response
- Offer incentives of any kind for participation in the survey
- Show or provide the CAHPS for ACOs Survey materials (pre-notification letter, cover letter or survey) to beneficiaries prior to administration of the survey
- Indicate that the ACO's or provider's goal is for all beneficiaries to rate them a "10", "Yes", or "Always"