

# CAHPS Hospice Communication Guidelines

The CAHPS Hospice Survey and its administration protocol like all patient surveying, is meant to provide an unbiased assessment about the experiences of decedents who died while receiving hospice care as well as the experiences of their caregivers. To help ensure that all hospices are being rated fairly based on the care they provide, CMS has created guidelines for communicating about the survey and survey results.

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

## Purpose of the CAHPS Hospice Survey

CMS designed the CAHPS Hospice Survey to produce standardized information about decedents'/ caregivers' perspectives of care that allows objective and meaningful comparisons of hospices on topics that are important to consumers. In the future, public reporting of CAHPS Hospice Survey results will create incentives for hospices to improve the quality of care while enhancing accountability in healthcare by increasing transparency.

In order to fulfill these goals, it is essential that to the fullest extent possible:

- caregivers respond to the CAHPS Hospice Survey, and
- caregivers' responses are informed only by the care their family member or friend received from the hospice named on the survey cover

The CAHPS Hospice Survey administration protocols are designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- to increase the likelihood that caregivers will respond to the survey, the CAHPS Hospice Survey should be the first survey a caregiver receives about their family member's or friend's experience of hospice care
- to ensure that the caregiver's responses are unbiased and reflect only his or her family member's or friend's experiences of care, hospices and survey vendors (and anyone acting on their behalf) must not attempt to influence how the caregiver responds to CAHPS Hospice Survey items.

## Communicating with Patients and Their Caregivers about the Hospice CAHPS Survey

Hospice CAHPS Survey guidelines allow hospices to communicate about the Hospice CAHPS Survey with patients and/or their caregivers prior to administration of the survey. For example, hospices may inform caregivers during the patient's admission to the hospice that they may receive the Hospice CAHPS Survey. If a hospice wants to let caregivers know that they may receive a survey and encourage them to complete it, the hospice must inform all caregivers. Certain types of communications are not permitted because they may introduce bias in the survey results. For instance, hospices/survey vendors are not allowed to:

- Ask any CAHPS Hospice Survey or CAHPS Hospice Survey-like questions of caregivers prior to administration of the survey

- Attempt to influence or encourage caregivers to answer CAHPS Hospice Survey questions in a particular way
- Imply that the hospice, its personnel or agents will be rewarded or gain benefits for positive feedback from caregivers by asking caregivers to choose certain responses, or indicate that the hospice is hoping for a given response, such as a “10,” “Definitely yes,” or an “Always”
- Ask caregivers to explain why he or she chose their specific response; for example, it is not acceptable to ask caregivers why they indicated that they would not recommend the hospice to friends and family
- Indicate that the hospice’s goal is for all caregivers to rate them as a “10,” “Definitely yes,” or an “Always”
- Offer incentives of any kind for participation in the survey
- Show or provide the CAHPS Hospice Survey or cover letters to caregivers

### **Communicating Survey Results**

Any responses that would identify a particular decedent/caregiver case should not be shared with direct care staff. These results should be limited to management and/or quality improvement personnel.