

**Minimum Survey Vendor Business Requirements
CAHPS for Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) Survey**

Applicant Organizations (Vendor and Subcontractors) must currently possess all required facilities and systems to implement the CAHPS for PQRS Survey. Subcontractors will be subject to the same requirements as the applicant Vendor. Organizations that are approved to administer the CAHPS for PQRS Survey must conduct all their business operations within the United States. This requirement applies to all staff and subcontractors.

Purpose: any interested survey vendor is required to possess the following minimum business requirements to ensure that all participating survey vendors are capable of administering the CAHPS for PQRS Survey in an unbiased and competent manner. At a minimum, this includes basic quality assurance and control systems and activities.

Criteria	
Relevant Organizational Survey Experience	
Relevant Survey Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated experience (minimum of 3 years) in Mixed-Mode of administration that includes a combination of mail and telephone follow-up. The 3 years Mixed-Mode experience must be fulfilled by the applicant vendor and not its subcontractor. • Demonstrated experience (minimum of 2 years) with patient-specific experience of care surveys, surveying vulnerable populations, and experience in a health care setting • Demonstrated experience (minimum of 2 years) conducting surveys of the Medicare population • Demonstrated experience in implementing a statistical sampling process • Demonstrated experience in implementing HIPAA and other data security requirements
Number of Years in Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 3 years
Number of Years Conducting CAHPS Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years conducting CAHPS surveys of individuals
Survey Capability and Capacity	
Personnel	Designate key CAHPS for PQRS Survey personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager with 2 years of mode-specific relevant survey experience • Information Systems Specialist(s) and Computer Programmer(s)/Developer(s) with experience receiving large encrypted data files in different formats/software packages electronically from an external organization; processing survey data needed for survey administration and survey response data; preparing data files for electronic submission; and submitting data files to an external organization • Call Center/Mail Center Supervisor (subcontractor designee, if applicable) with minimum 1 year prior experience in role • Have organizational back-up staff for coverage of key staff • Volunteers are not permitted to be involved in any aspect of the CAHPS for PQRS Survey administration process

Criteria	
Facilities and Systems (all administration modes)	<p>Has the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical facilities and electronic equipment and software to collect, process and report data securely • A secure commercial office/facility in which all survey activities are conducted • Facilities and processes to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information and patient response data (e.g., hardcopy documents must be stored in a locked file cabinet, room, or building) • Systems needed to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information AND survey data received from patients. (e.g., password protections, firewalls, data encryption software, personnel access limitation procedures, and virus and spyware protection) • Computers and other equipment needed for survey implementation • Systems and ability to receive electronic sample files containing patient-level data (the sample) needed to administer the survey • Electronic survey management system to track fielded surveys • All System Resources are subject to oversight activities, including site visits to physical locations
Experience with Multiple Survey Languages	<p>Must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior experience required in conducting survey administration in both English AND one of the following languages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spanish ○ Cantonese ○ Mandarin ○ Korean ○ Russian ○ Vietnamese
Mixed-Mode Survey Administration	<p>Must have capability to adhere to the following Mixed-Mode survey administration requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail – Must have capability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verify addresses of sampled patients ○ Print according to formatting guidelines professional-quality survey instruments and materials ○ Merge and print sample name and address on personalized mail survey cover letters and print their unique sample identification number and PQRS provider name associated with each sampled beneficiary on the mail surveys ○ Receive and process (key entry or scanning) completed mail surveys received ○ Track and identify non-respondents for follow-up mailing ○ Assign final status codes to describe the final result of work on each sampled case ○ Track cases from mail survey through telephone follow-up activities

Criteria	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must have the equipment, software and facilities to conduct interviews using computer assisted technology for interviewing (e.g., CATI) and to monitor interviewers ○ Must have capability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verify telephone numbers ▪ Develop computer programs for electronically administering the survey ▪ Collect data using computer assisted technology for interviewing (e.g., CATI) ▪ Schedule call backs to non-respondents at varying times of the day/week ▪ Assign final status codes to reflect the results of attempts to obtain completed interview with sampled cases ○ Accommodate inquiries in all languages the survey was administered in • Mail Survey administration and telephone interviews are not to be conducted from a residence, nor from a virtual office
Data Processing and File Submission	<p>Must have capability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan or key data from completed mail surveys • Develop data files and edit and clean data according to standard protocols • Follow all data cleaning and data submission rules, including verifying that data files are de-identified and contain no duplicate cases • Export data from the electronic data collection system into the specified ASCII format, confirm that the data were exported correctly and that the ASCII files are formatted correctly and contain the correct data headers and data records • Encrypt data files for transmission per specifications • Submit data electronically in the specified format (ASCII) to the CAHPS for PQRS Survey secured website • Work with CMS' contractor to resolve data problems and data submission problems
Data Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute business associate agreement with the Group Practice and receive annual authorization from the Group Practice to collect data on their behalf and submit to CMS • Store returned paper surveys in a secure and environmentally safe location (e.g., locked file cabinet, room, or building) • Utilize firewalls and/or other mechanisms to protect electronic files • Employ electronic security via implementation of access levels and passwords • Implement daily data back-up procedures that safeguard system data • Utilize required encryption protocols for transmitting data files • Develop procedures for identifying and handling breaches of confidential data • Data custodian must be accountable for all data security for data collection as specified in the Data Use Agreement with CMS

Criteria	
Data Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain all data files for a minimum of 3 years
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include content regarding confidentiality and disclosure that is HIPAA compliant in the Quality Assurance Plan • Store CAHPS for PQRS Survey data files (paper or electronic) securely and confidentially in accordance with requirements specified in the Quality Assurance Guidelines
Customer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide toll-free customer support telephone lines with live operator during regular business hours (to be established from the time of the pre-notification letter through the end of data collection) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer support must be offered in all languages that the survey vendor administers the survey in ○ Respond to calls within 24-48 hours
Adherence to Quality Assurance Guidelines and Participation in QA Activities	
Demonstrated Quality Control Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated ability to incorporate well-documented quality control procedures (as applicable) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-house training of staff involved in survey operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ printing, mailing and recording of receipt of mail surveys ○ Telephone administration of survey (electronic telephone interviewing system) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ coding and editing of survey data and survey-related materials ○ Scanning or keying in survey data ○ Preparing final person-level data files for submission ○ All other functions and processes that affect the administration of the CAHPS for PQRS Survey • Participate in any conference calls and mandatory site visits requested by the Oversight Team as part of overall quality monitoring activities • Develop and submit annual Quality Assurance Plans by a due date CMS specifies
Documentation Requirements	
	<p>Must provide documentation as requested for site visits and conference calls, including but not limited to: staff training records, telephone interviewer monitoring records, and file construction documentation.</p> <p>Must have capability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep electronic or hard copy files of individuals trained, and training dates • Maintain electronic or hard copy records of interviewers monitored (for telephone administration) • Maintain electronic or hard copy records of mailing dates • Maintain other documentation necessary to allow the CAHPS for PQRS Survey Oversight Team to review survey protocol implementation during site visits • Maintain documentation of actions required (and taken) as a result of any decisions made during site visits by the Oversight Team

Criteria	
Adhere to all Protocols, Specifications and Agree to Participate in Training Sessions and Quality Assurance Activities	
Survey Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and successfully complete the CAHPS for PQRS Survey Webinar Training Session and all CAHPS for PQRS Survey Update Training Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vendor and subcontractor organizations with the following personnel (at a minimum) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Manager ▪ Mail Survey Supervisor ▪ Telephone Survey Supervisor <p>Recommended: Programmer/Developer and/or their supervisor <i>Note: Minimum of one person per subcontractor performing key roles are required to attend the training session</i></p> • Complete an assessment measuring comprehension of CAHPS for PQRS Survey protocols
Approval Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year subject to annual re-approval • Approved survey vendors are required to maintain at least one active CAHPS for PQRS Survey client contract within a consecutive 2 year period (24 months). The 2 year timeframe for maintaining at least one CAHPS for PQRS Survey active client contract begins with the start of the fielding period immediately subsequent to the survey vendor's approval
Administer the Survey According to all Survey Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must review and follow all procedures described in the <i>CAHPS for PQRS Survey Quality Assurance Guidelines Version 1.0</i> • Agree to all conditions in the Vendor Participation Form