

## 2003 Medicaid Versus Commercial Beneficiary Experience with Care

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### BACKGROUND

CAHPS® is a widely used survey instrument measuring consumer experiences with health care. The National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database (NCBD) project, funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, has compiled CAHPS® survey results from a variety of sponsors into a single national database, the NCBD, that enables participants to compare their results to relevant benchmarks such as national and regional averages. CAHPS® measures the four overall beneficiary ratings of experience: rating of plan, care, personal doctor, and specialist. It also measures several other components of service including getting needed care, communication with providers, getting care quickly, getting special medical equipment and services, and getting prescription medicine. There are adult and child versions of CAHPS®<sup>1</sup>. The 2003 database holds survey results for approximately 350,000 adults and children enrolled in commercial, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and Medicare plans (refer to <http://www.cahps.ncps.org>).

CMS' Center for Medicaid and State Operations is attempting to improve health care quality in both the Medicaid and SCHIP Programs. We analyzed 2003

NCBD data to highlight the following factors that are viewed as critical in assessing Medicaid recipients' reported experience with health care:

- Comparison of Medicaid with commercial health plans in CAHPS® ratings.
- Comparison between adult and children's CAHPS® ratings.

### RESULT HIGHLIGHTS

#### Children

Table 1 compares demographic characteristics of children surveyed in Medicaid and commercial plans. Compared to commercial plans, children in Medicaid were more likely to be non-White, under age 1 or over age 13, have less education, be enrolled in a health maintenance organization (HMO), and reside in the South.

Table 2 compares CAHPS® ratings of Medicaid and commercial children. Medicaid children gave more favorable ratings of their personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and their health plan (Figure 1). Medicaid children were slightly less likely than commercial children to respond that they always get help or care when they called the office, needed care immediately, or received an appointment as soon as they wanted. They were also less likely than commercial children to respond that they always received needed care the same day, but slightly more likely to respond that they received regular or routine care within 3 days.

<sup>1</sup> In the children's version, an adult responds for the child.

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Medicaid children were about as likely as commercial children to experience always being treated with respect and courtesy by office staff (79.2 versus 80.5 percent), and to feel that office staff was always helpful (67.3 versus 66.2 percent). Medicaid children compared to commercial children experienced more problems seeing a specialist, getting a doctor they were happy with, and getting necessary care, tests, and treatment. Paperwork was perceived as more of a problem with Medicaid children than commercial children. Doctors or other providers explaining things so they could always be understood was more of a problem for Medicaid children as was being able to talk to the doctor about care.

## Adults

Medicaid adults compared to commercial adults were more likely to be female, non-White, under age 25, have less formal education, be enrolled in an HMO, and reside in the Midwest (Table 3). Medicaid adults were also more likely to rate their health status as fair or poor, to smoke every day, to indicate that they did not need to see a specialist, and to indicate that they were at the emergency room in the last 12 months (Table 4).

Table 5 compares adults in Medicaid and commercial in terms of CAHPS® ratings. Adult Medicaid beneficiaries were more likely than their commercial counterparts to respond that their personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and health plan were “the best possible” (Figure 2). However, adults in Medicaid compared to adults in commercial plans

were less likely to respond that they always received help or care when they called the office, needed care immediately, or wanted an appointment. In addition, adults in Medicaid compared to commercial plan beneficiaries were less likely to receive care the same day when they needed that care immediately. They were more likely, on the other hand, to receive regular or routine care that they needed within 3 days. Medicaid adults had more problems seeing a specialist and in getting necessary care, tests, and treatments than commercial adults.

## CONCLUSION

CAHPS® ratings of children and adults in Medicaid, in terms of overall care and specific aspects of care tend to be related. In general, CAHPS® ratings of personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and health plan tend to be higher for both children and adult beneficiaries enrolled in Medicaid health plans than for children and adult commercial beneficiaries. However, commercial plan enrollees, both children and adults, tend to have higher ratings for getting help and care immediately for non-routine care. Medicaid enrollees tend to experience slightly fewer delay problems with regular or routine care. However, according to their ratings, Medicaid plan enrollees whether children or adult, tend to experience more problems in seeing a specialist and in getting necessary care, tests, and treatments.

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**Table 1**  
**Demographic Characteristics of Children Surveyed in Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003**

Variable	Demographic	Medicaid	Commercial
			Percent
Sex of Child	Female	47.2	48.7
Race of Child	White	47.0	82.1
Age of Child	<1 Year	3.0	0.2
	1-4 Years	35.9	28.1
	5-9 Years	33.3	35.3
	10-13 Years	23.4	36.5
	14-18 Years	4.4	0.0
Education of Caretaker	8th Grade or <	4.8	0.2
	Some High School, But Not Graduated	15.9	1.5
	High School Graduate or GED	40.5	18.4
	Some College or 2-Year Degree	31.2	36.0
	4-Year College Degree	5.3	24.1
	More Than 4-Year College Degree	2.3	19.7
Model Type	HMO	88.1	55.5
	HMO/POS Combined	0.0	45.5
	PCCM	11.9	0.0
Region or Member State	Midwest	29.3	29.9
	Northeast	13.7	26.7
	South	40.9	25.6
	West	16.1	17.7

NOTES: GED is General Educational Development. HMO is health maintenance organization. HMO/POS is health maintenance organization/point-of-service. PCCM is primary care care management.

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

**Table 2**  
**Comparison of Medicaid and Commercial Children's CAHPS® Ratings: 2003**

Item	Response	Medicaid		Commercial	
		Total N	Percent	Total N	Percent
<b>Overall Ratings</b>					
Personal Doctor/Registered Nurse	Best Possible	12,797	41.2	672	39.3
Specialist	Best Possible	3,067	45.5	194	36.7
Health Care	Best Possible	11,238	45.2	651	37.2
Health Plan	Best Possible	13,001	42.5	482	26.0
<b>Getting Help/Care</b>					
When Called Office	Always	12,385	69.4	1,046	72.5
When Need Care Immediately	Always	8,354	68.9	598	70.9
Appointment as Soon as Wanted	Always	8,175	58.9	838	56.5
<b>Days Waiting for Help/Care</b>					
When Need Care Immediately	Same Day	7,467	74.0	701	83.7
When Need Regular/Routine Care	3 Days or Fewer	11,282	70.3	149	67.0
<b>Potential Problems</b>					
Getting Doctor/Registered Nurse That I'm Happy With	Not a Problem	10,836	78.4	761	78.9
Seeing a Specialist	Not a Problem	3,814	66.4	404	74.4
Getting Necessary Care/Tests/Treatments	Not a Problem	7,492	81.8	899	88.1
Delay of Care Waiting for Approval	Not a Problem	8,687	81.4	244	72.6
Getting Special Medical Equipment	Not a Problem	948	72.1	N/A	N/A
Getting Therapy for Child	Not a Problem	939	68.0	N/A	N/A
Getting Treatment/Counseling	Not a Problem	1,800	68.2	N/A	N/A
Finding/Understanding Plan Materials	Not a Problem	3,487	77.8	281	65.0
Getting Customer Service Help	Not a Problem	5,458	67.7	285	70.4
Complaints Solved to Satisfaction	Yes	888	76.9	52	76.5
Paperwork	Not a Problem	4,639	76.6	217	82.8
Getting Refill of Prescription Medicine	Not a Problem	9,256	85.3	N/A	N/A
<b>Treatment by Office Staff</b>					
With Respect/Courtesy	Always	19,755	79.2	1,411	80.5
Helpful	Always	16,772	67.3	1,157	66.2
<b>Doctor/Provider Behavior</b>					
Listen To You Carefully	Always	18,465	74.0	1,319	75.4
Hard Understanding/Different Language	Never	21,040	84.5	N/A	N/A
Explain So You Understand	Always	18,778	75.4	1,436	82.1
Respect What You Say	Always	18,308	75.6	1,352	77.4
Spend Enough Time With Child	Always	11,103	62.0	1,126	64.3
Child Able To Talk To Doctor About Care	Yes	11,517	60.4	1,266	72.5
Child Has Hard Time Understanding Provider	Never	11,396	82.6	N/A	N/A
Doctor/Provider Explain Things To Child Appropriately	Always	9,223	63.7	799	63.6
How Often Doctor Makes Easy Discussing Concerns	Always	3,095	59.6	N/A	N/A
How Often Get Information Needed From Doctor	Always	2,935	56.5	N/A	N/A
How Often Have Questions Answered By Doctor	Always	3,239	62.3	N/A	N/A
How Often Doctor Offers Health Care Choices	Always	2,508	55.5	N/A	N/A
How Often Doctor Discusses Good/Bad Healthy Choices	Always	2,889	64.0	N/A	N/A
How Often Doctor Asked Choice You Preferred	Always	2,382	52.8	N/A	N/A
How Often Doctor Involved You	Always	3,060	67.5	N/A	N/A

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

**Table 3**  
**Demographic Characteristics of Children Surveyed in Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003**

Variable	Demographic	Medicaid	Commercial
			Percent
Sex	Female	76.5	58.2
Race	White	58.2	79.9
Age	18-24 Years	19.6	3.8
	25-34 Years	22.9	12.6
	35-44 Years	22.5	21.6
	45-54 Years	16.3	26.7
	55-64 Years	12.1	22.3
	65-74 Years	4.3	7.6
	75 Years or >	2.3	5.4
Education	8th Grade or <	9.4	1.3
	Some High School, Did Not Graduate	22.1	3.6
	High School Graduate or GED	39.4	25.2
	Some College or 2-Year Degree	24.6	34.2
	4-Year College Degree	3.0	17.4
	More Than 4-Year College Degree	1.5	18.4
Model Type	HMO	88.6	43.9
	HMO/POS Combined	1.9	34.0
	PPO	0.0	18.7
	PCCM	8.1	0.0
	Commercial Indemnity	0.0	0.3
	FFS	1.3	0.0
Region of Member State	Midwest	38.2	28.4
	Northeast	18.6	17.2
	South	24.4	21.8
	West	18.8	25.3

NOTES: GED is General Educational Development. HMO is health maintenance organization. HMO/POS is health maintenance organization/point-of-service. PPO is preferred provider organization. PCCM is primary care case management. FFS is fee-for-service.

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

**Table 4**  
**Survey Characteristics of Adult Status and Behavior, by Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003**

Variable	Response	Medicaid	Commercial
		Percent	
Health Status	Excellent	11.7	17.7
	Very Good	21.9	40.3
	Good	30.7	31.7
	Fair	25.0	8.9
	Poor	10.7	1.5
Smoking	Every Day	54.1	24.9
	Some Days	16.7	10.5
	Not at All	28.7	64.4
	Don't Know	0.5	0.2
Needed to See Specialist	Yes	43.5	54.7
	No	56.5	45.3
Saw Specialist	Yes	38.4	54.5
	No	61.6	45.3
Made Appointment for Non-Emergency Care	Yes	67.4	77.3
	No	32.6	22.7
Times at Emergency Room in Last 12 Months	None	66.0	80.3
	1	18.4	14.3
	2	7.9	3.5
	3	3.7	1.1
	4	1.7	0.4
	5-9	1.6	0.3
	10 or >	0.7	0.1

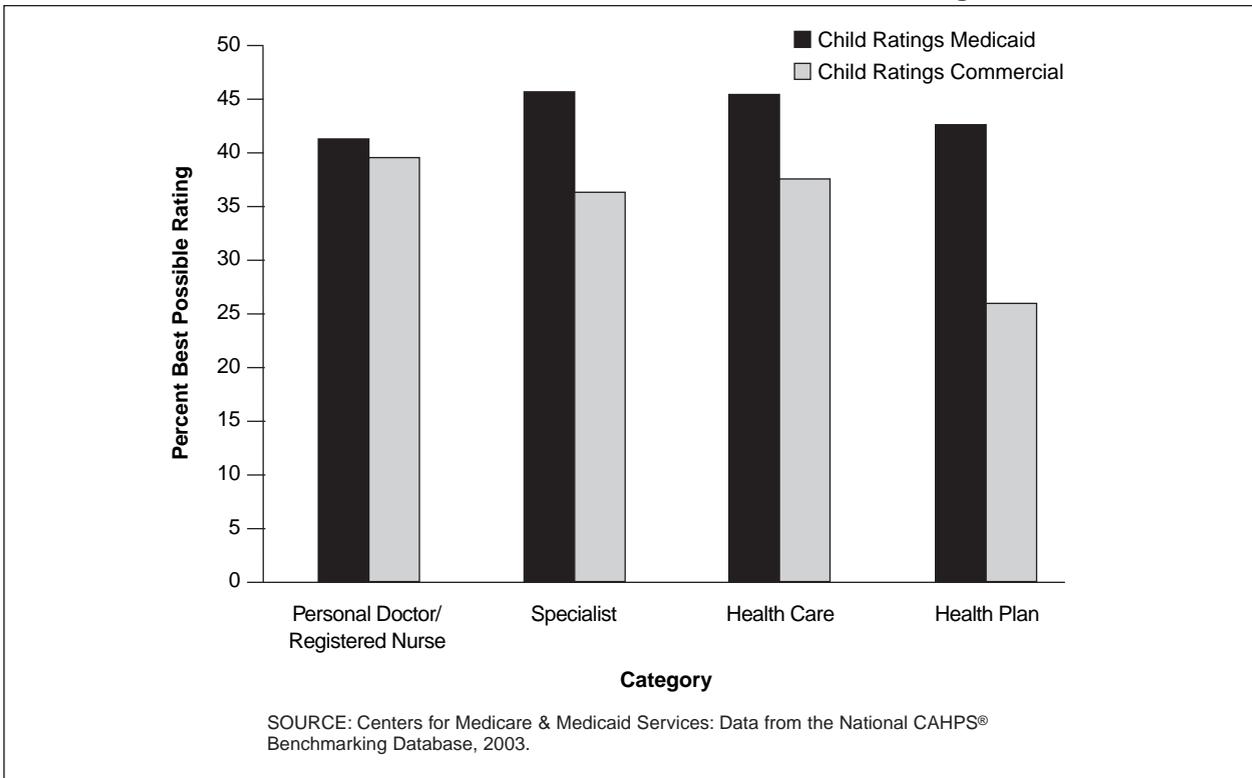
SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of Medicaid and Commercial Adult CAHPS® Rating: 2003**

Item	Response	Medicaid		Commercial	
		Total N	Percent	Total N	Percent
<b>Overall Ratings</b>					
Personal Doctor/Registered Nurse	Best Possible	30,333	44.9	96,658	31.5
Specialist	Best Possible	22,988	42.6	61,338	34.0
Health Care	Best Possible	10,766	35.6	96,861	25.6
Health Plan	Best Possible	38,087	34.6	111,613	20.6
<b>Getting Help/Care</b>					
When Called Office	Always	23,149	55.5	73,582	57.3
When Need Care Immediately	Always	21,558	55.9	113,423	61.2
Appointment As Soon As Wanted	Always	21,077	46.0	87,293	42.3
<b>Days Waiting For Help/Care</b>					
When Need Care Immediately	Same Day	15,974	40.7	43,246	61.8
When Need Regular/Routine Care	3 Days or Fewer	23,320	57.3	84,686	47.8
<b>Potential Problems</b>					
Getting Doctor/Nurse That I'm Happy With	Not a Problem	22,338	66.7	70,020	69.6
Seeing a Specialist	Not a Problem	13,954	63.6	61,571	75.7
Getting Necessary Care/Tests/Treatments	Not a Problem	20,819	73.8	79,112	83.5
Delay of Care Waiting For Approval	Not a Problem	15,292	64.8	79,633	67.3
Getting Customer Service Help	Not a Problem	12,942	64.0	47,390	63.8
Complaints Solved To Satisfaction	Yes	2,312	75.7	12,112	79.5
Paperwork	Not a Problem	6,864	70.5	24,139	71.4
Taken To Exam Room Within 15 Minutes	Always	24,654	18.5	96,712	17.0
<b>Treatment by Office Staff</b>					
With Respect/Courtesy	Always	30,390	72.6	97,214	72.4
Helpful	Always	18,037	59.3	97,199	55.9
<b>Doctor/Provider Behavior</b>					
Listen To You Carefully	Always	19,014	62.6	97,137	59.1
Hard Understanding/Different Language	Never	24,240	79.9	N/A	N/A
Explain So You Understand	Always	18,935	62.4	97,165	62.5
Respect What You Say	Always	19,546	64.4	97,136	62.3
Spend Enough Time With You	Always	15,862	52.3	97,091	49.4

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

**Figure 1**  
**Medicaid and Commercial Children's CAHPS® Overall Ratings: 2003**



**Figure 2**  
**Adult Medicaid Versus Commercial CAHPS® Overall Ratings: 2003**

