2026 Qualified Health Plan Enrollee Experience Survey (QHP Enrollee Survey)
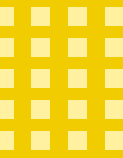
Vendor Training

September 2025

Agenda

Topic	Time (ET)
Welcome and Training Introduction	2:00–2:10 p.m.
Program Overview	2:10–2:25 p.m.
Eligibility and Sampling	2:25–2:50 p.m.
Data Collection Protocol	2:50–3:30 p.m.
Break	3:30–3:45 p.m.
Data Coding, File Specifications, and Data Submission	3:45–4:10 p.m.
Data Analysis and Public Reporting	4:10–4:25 p.m.
Quality Oversight	4:25–4:45 p.m.
Wrap-Up and Next Steps	4:45–5:00 p.m.

Welcome and Training Introduction

Welcome and Training Introduction

- Welcome to the 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey vendor training

- Today's training focuses on:

  - New/revised guidance from the QHP Enrollee Survey: Technical Specifications for 2026 (2026 Technical Specifications)

  - Key highlights from the 2026 Technical Specifications

  - Changes to survey instruments and protocols

  - Quality assurance and oversight

- Vendors are responsible for reviewing the *QHP Enrollee Survey: Technical Specifications for 2026* (2026 Technical Specifications) and all survey materials posted on the Health Insurance Marketplace Quality Initiatives (MQI) website
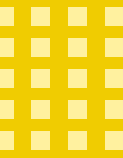
Special Bullets

★ = New/Revised Guidance from the 2026 Technical Specifications

! = Key Highlights from the 2026 Technical Specifications

Note. References to appendices (e.g., Appendix D), exhibits (e.g., Exhibit 18), sections (e.g., Section 9) and tables (e.g., Table E-2) refer to the 2026 Technical Specifications

Program Overview

Overview

- Introduction to the QHP Enrollee Survey

- QHP Enrollee Survey goals

- About the survey instrument

- Roles and responsibilities

- QHP Enrollee Survey website

- QHP Enrollee Survey timeline

- Key changes for 2026

- Technical assistance

Introduction to the QHP Enrollee Survey

- Established by Section 1311(c)(4) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

- Assesses enrollee experience and satisfaction with each QHP offered through the Health Insurance Exchanges (Exchanges)

- Supplies data to the Quality Rating System (QRS)

- Collects data for production of Quality Improvement (QI) reports

- QHP issuers are required to submit QHP Enrollee Survey response data and QRS clinical measure data as a condition of certification and participation in the Exchanges

QHP Enrollee Survey Goals

- Provide comparable and useful information to consumers about the quality of health care services and enrollee experience with QHPs offered through the Exchanges

- Facilitate oversight of QHP issuer compliance with quality reporting standards set forth in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

- Provide actionable information that QHP issuers can use to improve quality and performance

About the Survey Instrument

- 67 questions, including Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and systems (CAHPS®) questions, and questions specifically designed for the QHP enrollee population
  - Supplemental questions not permitted
  - ★ Beginning in 2026, the Enrollee Experience with Cost domain is included in the QRS measure set

QHP Enrollee Survey Topics	
Access to Care*	Doctor Communication
Access to Information*	★Enrollee Experience with Cost*
Care Coordination*	Plan Administration*
Cultural Competence	Prevention*

*Survey questions within this topic are included in the QRS measure set.

Note. CAHPS®, Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems, is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Roles and Responsibilities: Project Team

- Under guidance from CMS, the Project Team:
  - Provides vendors with standardized survey fielding protocols, the associated timeline and materials, and a description of data submission methods for the QHP Enrollee Survey through distribution of the 2026 Technical Specifications
  - Trains vendors to administer and submit data for the QHP Enrollee Survey annually
  - Conducts oversight of vendor processes and procedures prior to and during survey fielding
  - Provides technical assistance via email to vendors and QHP issuers
  - Supplies vendors with the tools, format, and procedures for submitting collected data
  - Processes, reviews, and analyzes data files submitted by vendors
  - Provides summary-level QHP Enrollee Survey results to QHP issuers and Exchanges

Roles and Responsibilities: QHP Issuers

- Attend 2026 QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey webinars on the Registration for Technical Assistance Portal (REGTAP)
- Contract with:
  - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-approved vendor to conduct survey
  - National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) Compliance Auditor to validate sample frame
- Generate sample frame for each reporting unit (on or after January 7, 2026)
  - HEDIS® Compliance Auditor completes validation of the QHP Enrollee Survey sample frame by January 30, 2026
  - ! QHP issuer securely provides auditor-locked sample frame and documentation of the sample frame validation results to contracted vendor
- Complete the following via the QHP Enrollee Survey website for each reporting unit no later than January 30, 2026:
  - Attest to eligibility or ineligibility for the 2026 QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey requirements
  - If eligible, report selected vendor to CMS to authorize the vendor to collect data on behalf of the issuer
  - If eligible, confirm reporting unit is contracted with a HEDIS Compliance Auditor to validate QHP Enrollee Survey sample frame

Roles and Responsibilities: Vendors

- Meet the QHP Enrollee Survey Minimum Business Requirements
  - ★ Capacity to oversee remote operations and confirm the continued quality assurance and data security of remote staff for select survey functions, if applicable
- Adhere to participation rules and program requirements
- Administer survey per the 2026 Technical Specifications
- Oversee work of staff and subcontractors
- Conduct all business operations at official location or home-based place of work within the continental U.S., Hawaii, Alaska, or U.S. Territories
  - ★ Remote operations do not require an exception request

! Maintain and establish security procedures as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Roles and Responsibilities: Vendors (cont'd)

- Contract with issuers and verify issuer clients have authorized vendor to submit data to CMS on their behalf

! Receive validated sample frame and perform quality assurance (QA) checks

- Draw sample according to specifications

! Notify CMS of issuers that do not provide a validated sample frame by January 30, 2026

- Submit files in accordance with specifications via the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#)

- Meet all project deadlines and reporting requirements

- After a minimum of three years, securely destroy QHP data files, including paper or scanned questionnaires and electronic data files

★ Verify desired oversampling percentages with QHP issuer clients and submit an oversampling Exception Request to CMS for approval on behalf of QHP issuer clients interested in oversampling beyond 30% and at any increment

QHP Enrollee Survey Website: Processes

- **Issuer Processes**
  - Attest to reporting unit eligibility/ineligibility
  - Report HHS-approved survey vendor to CMS
  - Review 2026 Operational Instructions (to be posted on the MQI website in Fall 2025), which include detailed steps to submit reporting unit eligibility status and survey vendor selection
- **Vendor Processes**
  - Submit test and final QHP Enrollee Survey response data

QHP Enrollee Survey Website: Registration

- Registration is required to gain access to the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#)

! Existing users do not need to re-register and can sign into the QHP Enrollee Survey website

- New users must:

  - Complete remote identity proofing (RIDP) to register an account in CMS's Identity Management (IDM) System and gain access to the QHP enrollee survey website as vendor or issuer (as applicable)

  - Provide required information (i.e., full legal name, social security number, date of birth, current residential address, and personal phone number)

    » CMS uses information provided **<u>only</u>** for the purpose of identity verification via the Experian identity verification system

    » Information is kept private and is not shared with any federal or private agency

    » Must set up multi-factor authentication for login

- Vendor and issuer website user guides are available on the [MQI website](#)

High-Level 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline

Task	Date
Conditionally approved vendors contract with QHP issuers	September–December 2025
Vendors notified of final approval status	October 2, 2025
• QHP issuers attest to QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey eligibility status, authorize a vendor, and confirm sample frame validation • Vendors obtain authorization from QHP issuer clients to conduct surveys on their behalf	**Deadline:** January 30, 2026
• Vendors receive validated sample frames from QHP issuer clients and obtain confirmation that a HEDIS® Compliance Auditor validated the sample frame • Vendors notify CMS of QHP issuer clients that have not provided validated sample frame by the deadline	**Deadline:** January 30, 2026

High-Level 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline (cont'd)

Task	Date
Vendors administer QHP Enrollee Survey per sampling and fielding protocols	February–May 2026
Vendors participate in QHP Enrollee Survey Data Submission Training	February 26, 2026
Test data submission	April 8–10, 2026
Final Data submission *Files due by 11:59 p.m. ET on May 15, 2026*	May 8–15, 2026
Data resubmission (if requested) *Must submit within three business days of date requested*	May 18–20, 2026

Note. See the Appendix of this slide deck for a comprehensive timeline of all activities for the 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey.

Technical Assistance Resources

- CMS Marketplace Quality Initiatives (MQI) website
  - General information, news, and updates
  - 2026 Technical Specifications and survey materials
  - Exception Request template
  - Discrepancy Report template
  - *QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey: 2026 Technical Guidance*
- Technical Assistance for Vendors
  - Email: QHP_Survey@air.org
- Technical Assistance for Issuers
  - Email: CMS_FEPS@cms.hhs.gov (include *QHP Enrollee Survey* in subject)
  - Phone: 1-855-CMS-1515 (1-855-267-1515)

Program Overview Questions?

Eligibility and Sampling

Eligibility and Sampling Overview

- Reporting unit definition and eligibility guidelines

- Reporting eligibility (QHP issuers) and client contracting (vendors) status to CMS

- Sample frame generation, validation, and layout

- Sampling protocol

- Sample frame quality assurance (QA) checks

- Fielding additional surveys using the QHP Enrollee Survey sample frame

Note. See Section 9: Determine QHP Issuer Eligibility and Section 10: Create Sample Frame and Draw Sample for detailed eligibility and sampling requirements.

Reporting Unit Definition

- QHP issuers are required to collect and submit validated QRS clinical measure data and QHP Enrollee Survey response data for each eligible reporting unit

- **Reporting unit** defined as the unique state-product type offered by a QHP issuer through the Exchange, including QHPs in both the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) and individual market
  - Excludes enrollees in basic health program (BHP) plans, indemnity plans (i.e., fee for service plans), stand-alone dental plans, and/or child-only plans
  - Product types subject to survey requirements: EPO, HMO, POS, PPO

- Identified by a Reporting Unit ID
  - Issuer ID–QHP State–Product Type
  - 12345–TX–PPO

- QHP issuers **must** combine SHOP and individual family plans if they are the same product type offered in the same state and **must not** combine product types or states

Reporting Unit Eligibility Criteria

- QHP issuers are required to collect and submit QHP data for each reporting unit that meets all below criteria:

  - Offered through an Exchange in the prior year (2025)

  - Offered through an Exchange in the ratings year (2026) as same product type

  - Included more than 500 enrollees as of July 1, 2025

  - Included more than 500 enrollees as of January 1, 2026

- ! Count includes *all enrollees* within the reporting unit (**<u>not</u>** just "survey eligible" enrollees) in both SHOP and individual markets

- ! *Note.* If a reporting unit is discontinued before June 15 of the ratings year *and* all enrollees are automatically transferred to a new reporting unit of the same product type, then the new reporting unit is responsible for meeting reporting requirements

Reporting Unit Eligibility Examples

Reporting Unit	Enrollment as of July 1, 2025	Enrollment as of January 1, 2026	Discontinued Prior to June 15, 2026?	Required to submit QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey Data?
12345-WV-PPO	505 (505 individual, 0 SHOP)	505 (505 individual, 0 SHOP)	No	Yes
12345-WV-HMO	601 (501 individual, 100 SHOP)	N/A	Yes – Discontinued as of December 31, 2025	No – Not operating in ratings year
12345-MD-PPO	100 (55 individual, 45 SHOP)	100 (55 individual, 45 SHOP)	No	No – Insufficient enrollment size in both years
12345-MD-HMO	700 (700 individual, 0 SHOP)	300 (300 individual, 0 SHOP)	No	No – Insufficient enrollment size as of January 1, 2026
12345-MD-EPO	505 (300 individual, 205 SHOP)	501 (300 individual, 201 SHOP)	No	Yes
12345-MD-POS	500 (300 individual, 200 SHOP)	500 (300 individual, 200 SHOP)	No	No – Insufficient enrollment in both years

Reporting Eligibility Status to CMS: QHP Issuers

- QHP issuers must report eligibility or ineligibility for each reporting unit via the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#) by **January 30, 2026**
  - QHP issuers with **ineligible** reporting units must submit reporting unit information and ineligibility reason
  - QHP issuers with **eligible** reporting units must attest to reporting unit information and select and authorize an HHS-approved vendor
- CMS Identity Management (IDM) system and QHP Enrollee Survey website registration required
- The 2026 Operational Instructions (to be posted on the [MQI website](#) in Fall 2025) will include detailed steps on how to submit reporting unit eligibility status information to CMS via the QHP Enrollee Survey website

Reporting Client Contracting Status to CMS: Vendors

- The deadline for QHP issuers to contract with an HHS-approved vendor is **January 30, 2026**

- The Project Team provides vendors with templates to complete and submit two reports that provide the Project Team with an update on contracting status and oversampling plans

- Report #2: Preliminary Client List
  - Vendors submit a preliminary list of QHP issuer clients to QHP_Survey@air.org by **January 7, 2026**
  - The Project Team reconciles these lists with the QHP issuer authorizations to identify any discrepancies

- Report #3: Final Client List
  - Following the completion of QHP issuer contracting, vendors submit a final list of QHP issuer clients by **February 6, 2026**
  - The Project Team reconciles these lists with the QHP issuer authorizations to identify any outstanding discrepancies
  - Vendors also record the validated sample frame receipt status for each reporting unit in Report #3 and final oversampling percentage rates based on sample frame

Sample Frame Generation: QHP Issuers

- Populate sample frame of all survey-eligible enrollees for each eligible reporting unit
  - **<u>Do not</u>** combine sample files for different reporting units or products into a single file
  - Enrollees must meet both continuous and current enrollment requirements

  ! Enrollees on a "Do Not Survey" list remain eligible for sampling
  - Refer to Exhibit 12 for detailed enrollee eligibility requirements
- Adhere to sample frame file layout (Appendix E)
  - **<u>Must</u>** fully populate all sample frame variables
  - **<u>Do not</u>** append additional data fields
- ! Must generate sample frames on or after January 7, 2026
  - Include current enrollees and remove deceased enrollees as of 11:59 p.m. ET on January 6, 2026 (anchor date)
- Complete sample frame validation with HEDIS Compliance Auditor by January 30, 2026
- Provide a list of common plan name aliases to vendors

Sample Frame File Layout (Exhibit E-1)

★Added new variable: Claim or Encounter with QHP issuer

Variable	Description	Valid Values
Claim or Encounter with QHP Issuer	Enrollee had at least one claim or encounter with the QHP issuer during the measurement year. A health care claim or encounter is defined as one of the following: • A request to obtain payment, and the necessary accompanying information from a health care provider to a health plan, for health care. • Transmission of encounter information for the purpose of reporting health care, if there is no direct claim.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing Note: A valid value is required for every enrollee in the record. If unavailable, use 9 = Missing. Do NOT leave field blank.

Sample Frame File Layout (Exhibit E-1)

★Added new variable: Primary Care Provider Status

Variable	Description	Valid Values
Primary Care Provider Status	Enrollee had an assigned primary care provider during the measurement year. A primary care provider is a physician or nonphysician (e.g., nurse practitioner, physician assistant, certified nurse midwife) who offers primary care medical services. Licensed practical nurses and registered nurses are not considered primary care providers.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing Note: A valid value is required for every enrollee in the record. If unavailable, use 9 = Missing. Do NOT leave field blank.

Sample Frame File Layout (Exhibit E-1)

★Added new variable: Visit with Specialty Care Doctor

Variable	Description	Valid Values
Visit with Specialty Care Doctor	Enrollee had at least one visit with a specialty care doctor during the measurement year. A specialty care doctor (i.e., physician) is defined as a surgeon, heart doctor, allergy doctor, skin doctor and other doctor who specializes in one area of health care. Do not include dental visits.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing Note: A valid value is required for every enrollee in the record. If unavailable, use 9 = Missing. Do NOT leave field blank.

Sample Frame File Layout (Exhibit E-1)

★Updated field position for Total Enrollment, which shifted due to the addition of three new sample frame variables

Variable	Field Position Start	Field Position End
Total Enrollment	940	948

Sample Frame File Layout (Exhibit E-1)

★Updated date format for Enrollee Date of Birth

★Updated variable name and revised description of valid value 9 = Missing for Enrollee Sex

Variable	Field Position Start	Field Position End	Valid Values
Enrollee Date of Birth	165	172	YYYYMMDD
Enrollee Sex	173	222	1 = Male 2 = Female 9 = Missing Note: A valid value is required for every enrollee in the record.

Sample Frame Validation Process

1. **QHP issuer** generates the sample frame data file(s) per specifications

2. **QHP issuer** delivers the sample frame data file(s) to the NCQA HEDIS Compliance Auditor (auditor)

3. **Auditor** validates the sample frame data file(s) and notifies the QHP issuer of the results. If the auditor determines that the quality or completeness of the sample frame poses a threat to the desired survey response rate, the QHP issuer corrects the sample frame until the desired audit result is achieved

4. **QHP issuer** securely forwards the auditor-locked sample frame data file(s) and documentation of the validation results to the vendor

5. **Vendor** draws the survey sample and administers the survey per specifications

Vendor Sampling Activities

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
• Vendor receives the auditor-locked sample frame data file(s) from QHP issuer via secure transmission • Vendor unlocks sample frame data file(s) using the appropriate password according to the licensed organization that conducted the audit	• Vendor reviews sample frame data file(s) and conducts QA checks including, but not limited to, the checks specified in Exhibit 18 and Table E-2	• Vendor deduplicates the sample frame data file(s) according to the process included in Exhibit 15	• Vendor determines deduplication counts as specified in Exhibit 16

Vendor Sampling Activities (cont'd)

Step 5

- Vendor draws random sample of 1,300 enrollees from deduplicated sample frame
- If there are fewer than 1,300 enrollees in a reporting unit, the vendor surveys all enrollees in the sample frame
- ★ *CMS will permit vendors to submit an Exception Request to oversample at any desired percentage*

Step 6

- Vendor conducts final QA activities on the selected survey sample

Step 7

- Vendor excludes enrollees who appear on its internal "Do Not Survey" list from receiving survey outreach materials
- *Note.* Do not replace these individuals in the survey sample; assign a final disposition code of "X43–Do Not Survey List"

Sample Frame QA Checks

! QHP issuers provide validated sample frames to vendors by January 30, 2026

– Vendors notify CMS of any QHP issuer clients who do not provide a validated sample frame by January 30, 2026

! Vendors **must** conduct QA checks of the sample frames to verify accuracy

• QA checks verify that data from the sample frame are accurately captured to prevent sampling errors

• See Exhibit 18 for suggested sample frame QA checks for vendors

Sample Frame QA Checks (cont'd)

Example Vendor QA Checks for Sample Frame Files
• Verify that the Reporting Unit ID corresponds to the correct Issuer Legal Name
• Verify that the reporting unit's product type was the same in both 2025 and 2026
• Verify that the Reporting Unit ID is defined by the unique state-product type (EPO, HMO, POS, and PPO) for each QHP issuer
• Verify that the sample frame contains the entire eligible population, including both the individual market and SHOP enrollees
• Review the sample frame files for missing information
• Verify that State abbreviations in the QHP State and Reporting Unit ID are provided in capitalized letters
! Verify that enrollees are in QHPs offered through an Exchange. Exchange QHPs are designated as HIOS Variant IDs -01 through -06, and -31 through -36 for Medicaid Expansion QHP enrollees
★ Verify that total enrollment is accurate and greater than 500

Note. See Exhibit 18 for more examples. Exhibit 18 should not be considered an exhaustive list of QA activities.

Sample Frame QA Checks (cont'd)

- Select variables (0% bias variables) must be populated for every record in the file
  - Product Type
  - Issuer ID
  - QHP State
  - Reporting Unit ID
  - Variant ID
  - Reporting Status
  - Total Enrollment
- Must meet specific logic agreement checks for each record
- Discrepancies can indicate a potential sample error

Reconciling Sample Frame Discrepancies

- Common vendor-identified sample frame issues:
  - Inaccurate Enrollee Unique ID
  - Invalid Variant IDs
  - Incorrect Total Enrollment Counts
- Vendors **must** notify the Project Team at QHP_Survey@air.org immediately should any issues be identified with audit-locked sample frames
  - The Project Team will provide guidance for resolving discrepancies, such as approval for manually updating fields or direction for the issuer to pull a new sample frame
    - » Should it be necessary for the QHP issuer to pull a new sample frame, the revised sample frame must be audited and locked by HEDIS® Compliance Auditor before the issuer re-submits the new sample frame to their contracted vendor

Sampling Definitions

Subscriber or Family Identifier (SFID)	Enrollee Unique Identifier (EUID)
• Covered family unit • Primary insured person and covered dependents	• Specific person • Each person in the SFID has an EUID, including the primary insured person and every dependent

Sampling Protocol

1. Sort sample frame into the following hierarchy (Exhibit 15)
   - First: Sort by SFID to group all covered family members together
   - Second: Group all EUID's associated with the same SFID
2. Deduplicate sample frame
   - Deduplicate by SFID: Use simple random sampling to retain **one** eligible enrollee (i.e., EUID) per SFID
   - Deduplicate by address if:
     - SFIDs are unique for each enrollee in the covered family unit
     - Sample frame does not contain SFIDs
     - ! No deduplication by address if already deduplicated by SFIDs
3. Draw random sample of 1,300 enrollees from deduplicated sample frame
   - If oversampling, draw sample according to approved oversampling percentage
   - ! If sample frame ≤1,300 enrollees, include all enrollees

Deduplication Counts

- Vendors calculate three "count" variables based on deduplication for inclusion in submitted data files

- "Count" variables used to determine selection probabilities and create survey weights

Field	Description
n_fr	Total number of enrollees in the sample frame for each reporting unit *before* deduplication. *Note.* This value will be the same for all enrollees in the same reporting unit
K	Number of survey-eligible enrollees (or EUIDs) covered under each SFID; calculated by summing the number of EUIDs per SFID (or address, if applicable) *before* the deduplication step. *Note.* This value will vary by enrollee
M	Total number of records in the sample frame for reporting unit *after* deduplication. *Note.* This value will be the same for all enrollees in the same reporting unit

Oversampling

- Oversampling is permitted at the reporting unit level if eligible enrollee volume is sufficient to support the increased sample size

- QHP issuers should notify their vendor of oversampling plans as early as possible

- Vendors with QHP issuer clients interested in oversampling in 5% increments not exceeding 30% may do so without an approved exception and must submit oversampling requests by **January 7, 2026** (as part of Report #2)

! Vendors with QHP issuer clients interested in oversampling beyond the 30% cap and at any increment **must** submit a preliminary exception request to CMS by **November 28, 2025**
  - If details regarding interested QHP issuer clients and/or desired oversampling percentages are not available at the time of this preliminary request, vendors must submit a final oversampling request along with Report #2 by January 7, 2026

"Do Not Survey" List

- **Do not** exclude sampled enrollees based on a QHP Issuer's "Do Not Survey" List, including those who have opted out of emails

- **Do** exclude sampled enrollees based on internal vendor's "Do Not Survey" list
  - Assign "X43—Do Not Survey List"
  - ! Vendors are encouraged to maintain a QHP-specific "Do Not Survey" list

- If enrollee requests to be placed on "Do Not Survey" list after data collection begins:
  - Assign "X32—Refusal"
  - Add to internal "Do Not Survey" list

- Vendors maintain list for three years; list applies to all survey modes

! **Do not** remove or replace enrollees in the sample who have requested to not be contacted

Bad Addresses/Telephone Numbers and Email Preferences

- Enrollees in sample frame with known bad addresses or telephone numbers **cannot** be excluded from the survey sample

  – Known bad address: include enrollee in internet and telephone phases

  – Known bad telephone number: include enrollee in mail and internet phases

- Enrollees in sample frame who asked to be removed from QHP issuer email communications **cannot** be excluded from the final survey sample

  – Vendors still required to send the enrollee emails

    » *Exceptions:* The enrollee asks the vendor to stop email communication or appears on the vendor's internal "Do Not Survey" list

Summary Sample Quality Assurance (QA) Checks

! Vendors **<u>must</u>** conduct QA checks of survey sample to verify accurate deduplication and sampling procedures

- Assess completeness of enrollee contact information (mailing address, telephone number, email address)
  - If missing contact information threatens response rates, vendors may request additional contact information from the QHP issuer
  - QHP issuers may provide additional contact information for the entire validated sample frame
  - Vendors **<u>never</u>** send selected survey sample or identifiable person-level information to QHP issuers or ask for updated information for a particular enrollee

Fielding Additional Surveys

- Vendors are strongly discouraged from asking sampled enrollees any QHP Enrollee Survey questions four weeks prior to and during QHP Enrollee Survey Fielding

  – December 15, 2025 – May 15, 2026

- Vendors are permitted to use the QHP Enrollee Survey sample frame to draw additional samples for other survey efforts

  – Only after the QHP Enrollee Survey sample has been drawn

  – Vendors are strongly encouraged to exclude households and SFIDs that are sampled for the 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey

Summary of Key Updates: Eligibility and Sampling

★ Updated Exhibit 14 (Vendor Sampling Activities) to specify that CMS will permit vendors to submit an Exception Request to oversample at any desired percentage

★ Updated Oversampling section to reflect oversampling exception request process

★ Revised Exhibit 18 (Example Quality Assurance Checks for Sample Frame Files) to add a quality assurance check for sample frame files to verify that total enrollment field is accurate and greater than 500

★ Made the following revisions to Exhibit E-1 (Sample Frame File Layout):

   ★ Updated the valid value format for Enrollee Date of Birth

   ★ Added three variables to the sample frame (Claim or Encounter with QHP issuer; Primary Care Provider Status; and Visit with Specialty Doctor)

   ★ Adjusted the field position start and end for the Total Enrollment variable to account for the three newly added sample frame variables
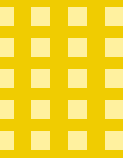
Eligibility and Sampling Questions?

Data Collection Protocol

Data Collection Protocol Overview

- Survey fielding

- Mail protocol

- Internet protocol

- Telephone protocol

- Customer support

Note. See Sections 12–16 for detailed data collection protocol requirements.

Survey Fielding

Mixed-Mode Administration

- Mail, internet, and telephone

- All modes available in English, Spanish, and Chinese

- Fielding in English and Spanish required

- Fielding in Chinese optional

- Vendors prohibited from translating survey into other languages

Mail: *English, Spanish, and Chinese*	Internet: *English, Spanish, and Chinese*	Telephone: *English, Spanish, and Chinese*
Prenotification letter	Notification email	Up to six follow-up calls to nonrespondents
Two survey packets	Two reminder emails	
Reminder letter	Web-based survey	

Survey Administration Schedule

Task	Date
• Sample enrollees per sampling protocols	Jan–Feb
• Mail prenotification letter,* activate internet survey, and open customer support telephone/email	Day 1
• Mail first survey packet to nonrespondents six calendar days after prenotification letter is mailed* • Send notification email to nonrespondents six calendar days after prenotification letter is mailed*	Day 7
• Send first reminder email to nonrespondents six calendar days after the notification email is sent*	Day 13
• Send second reminder email to nonrespondents six calendar days after the first reminder email is sent*	Day 19
• Mail reminder letter to nonrespondents 13 calendar days after the first survey is mailed*	Day 20
• Mail second survey packet to nonrespondents 14 calendar days after the reminder letter is mailed*	Day 34
• Initiate telephone follow-up for nonrespondents 21 calendar days after second survey is mailed	Day 55–73
• End data collection activities and close customer support telephone/email**	Day 73

*If mailout/email day falls on a Sunday or federal holiday, mail/email the following business day.

** Vendors must accept and process data for all mail and internet surveys received through 2 weeks prior to the end of data submission (i.e., 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2026). If vendors are still fielding the survey after May 1, 2026, they must accept and process data for all mail and internet surveys received through the end of the protocol (Day 73).

Additional Language Protocols

- Vendors and issuers determine best strategy to maximize response rates for Spanish/Chinese protocols
- In order to determine the language in which enrollees receive the survey, vendors may:
  - Select one language protocol for all enrollees in a reporting unit (based on direction from QHP issuer clients)
  - Use language preference indicators included in the sample frame received from QHP issuers to determine which enrollees are placed in which language protocol
  - "Double stuff" materials (mail and internet) so that sampled enrollees receive the materials in multiple languages
- All letters mailed in English must include instructions in Spanish and/or Chinese (if applicable) on how to request materials in preferred language
- If an enrollee requests a Spanish or Chinese survey (if applicable), it is strongly recommended that the vendor mails the survey within two business days
  - May attempt to complete an inbound Spanish/Chinese telephone interview during this request
- Vendors must accommodate enrollee requests to be contacted by telephone in Spanish/Chinese, (if applicable)

Additional Language Protocols (cont'd)

Outreach Mode	English Only	Spanish Only	Chinese Only	English/ Spanish Double Stuff	English/ Chinese Double Stuff	Spanish/ Chinese Double Stuff
Mail	Mailings in English only	Mailings in Spanish only	Mailings in Chinese only	Mailings include both English and Spanish	Mailings include both English and Chinese	Mailings include both Spanish and Chinese
Internet	Emails in English only	Emails in Spanish only	Emails in Chinese only	Emails include both English and Spanish	Emails include both English and Chinese	Emails include both Spanish and Chinese
Telephone	Calls in English only	Calls in Spanish only	Calls in Chinese only	Calls in either English or Spanish	Calls in either English or Chinese	Calls in either Spanish or Chinese

Survey Management System

! Vendors **<u>must</u>** implement an automated electronic Survey Management System (SMS) that:

- – Assigns deidentified unique ID to each sampled enrollee
- – Separates personally identifiable information (PII) from enrollee response data
- – Tracks sampled enrollee data and all key survey events
- – Tracks requests for Spanish/Chinese surveys
- – Tracks duplicate surveys
- – Links to internet survey and CATI system
- – Assigns disposition codes for each sampled enrollee

! Vendors log data collection activities in SMS within **<u>24 hours</u>**

! Vendors test system prior to implementation

Subcontractors

! **Not** permitted for sample frame receipt, survey sample selection, email/internet survey administration, or data preparation/submission

- Permitted for mail and telephone protocols, customer support, data receipt/processing

- Vendors must:
  - Provide oversight of subcontractors
  - Document subcontractor oversight processes in Quality Assurance Plans (QAPs)
  - Obtain signed confidentiality agreements from subcontractors
  - Attend subcontractor trainings

- Subcontractors must participate in all required Project Team quality oversight activities relevant to their specific survey roles (e.g., telephone interviewing subcontractors must participate in the telephone interviewer monitoring)
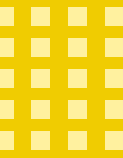
Data Security and Confidentiality

- Vendors and subcontractors must:
  - Adhere to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements
  - Sign confidentiality agreements annually
  - Protect sampled enrollee PII
  - Safeguard both hardcopy and electronic data
  - Notify CMS of confidentiality or data breaches within 24 hours
  - Follow all data confidentiality and security requirements described in the 2026 Technical Specifications

Data Retention and Destruction

- Securely retain data in an environmentally controlled location for a minimum of three years, including:

  – Mail, telephone, and internet data

  – Original sample frame, deduplicated sample frame, and survey sample

  – Hardcopy or scanned images of returned mail surveys

- After three years (or as otherwise specified by CMS), securely destroy all data files

★ Copies of signed confidentiality agreements must be retained by the vendor's project manager for one year. Vendors may be asked to provide this documentation during remote visits.

Mail Protocol

Mail Protocol Overview

- Four mailing waves
  - Prenotification Letter
  - Two survey packets that include a survey cover letter, survey instrument, and business reply envelope
  - Reminder letter
- Vendors update and standardize addresses prior to start of mail protocol using commercial tools (e.g., National Change of Address [NCOA] database)
- Mail materials available on [MQI website](#)
  - Content and format of vendor materials must not deviate from templates
  - Materials must follow all requirements outlined in 2026 Technical Specifications
  - ! Vendors may **not** revise materials after they are accepted by CMS
    - » The Project Team notifies vendors via email once materials are accepted

Mail Staff Training

- Vendors must train all staff (including subcontractors) involved in mail processes on applicable specifications and protocols

- Training topics for mailing and data collection staff include:
  - Operation of relevant equipment and software (e.g., SMS, scanning equipment, data entry programs)
  - Role-specific survey protocols (e.g., required mail survey packet content, documenting/entering returned surveys into the tracking system)
  - QA procedures for mail production activities and mailout processes
  - Decision rules and coding guidelines for returned surveys
  - Proper handling of hard-copy and electronic data, including data security and storage requirements

Mail Requirements

- Vendors must adhere to all requirements as outlined in the 2026 Technical Specifications:
  - Display the vendor's logo and/or the QHP issuer's logo in the header of the prenotification, cover, and reminder letters and on envelopes
  - Consistently use an easily readable font that is at least 11 points in size throughout the mail materials
  - Include the QHP issuer's recognizable plan name in designated fill locations
  - Include taglines as required by the QHP issuer for legal purposes

QR Codes

- Vendors must include the internet survey URL, log-in credentials, and a QR code on prenotification and reminder letters to inform enrollees of the internet survey option

★ QR codes must automatically log-in respondents to the survey when scanned and direct them to the survey instructions page

- Vendors must include instructions explaining how to use the QR code

- QR codes **must not** be printed on the first or second cover letters

Respond now at [**SURVEY URL**]

[**LOGIN CREDENTIAL(S)**]

or

Scan Me
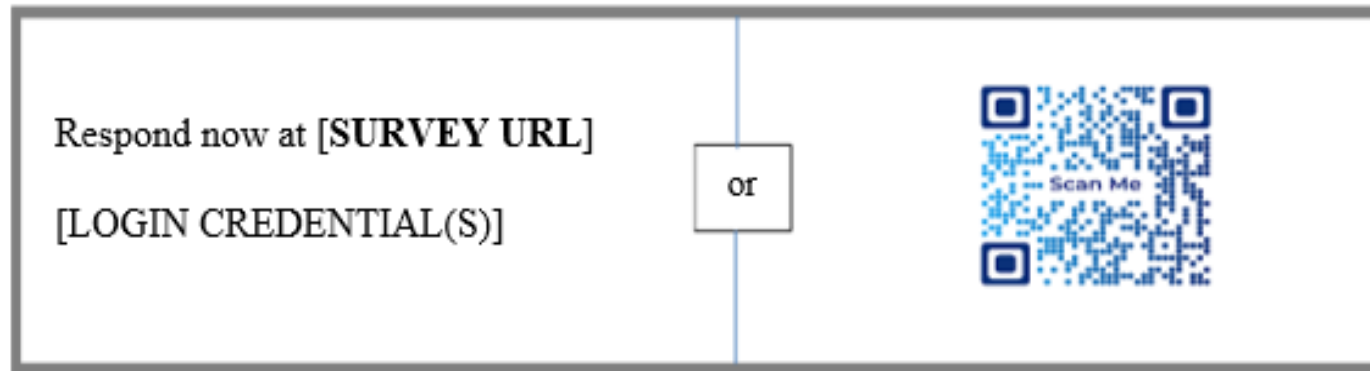
Accessible Communication and Nondiscrimination Notice

- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act requires covered entities to include certain statements and taglines in all "significant publications and significant communications"

  ★ The HHS Office for Civil Rights enforces Section 1557 and offers frequently asked questions (FAQs) on this requirement on its website (this link has been updated for 2026): https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/section-1557-final-rule-faqs-7282017rev15.pdf

- Vendors are required to include the CMS Accessible Communication and Nondiscrimination Notice with the survey mailing

  – The template for this notice is included in the survey instrument templates provided on the MQI website

  – Vendors may revise the formatting of this notice to fit on one page, as needed

Update to Chinese Mail Materials

★ Revised translation of Chinese word for "Dear"

[VENDOR LOGO] and/or [QHP ISSUER LOGO ONLY NO ADDRESS]
[VENDOR ADDRESS]

From: [VENDOR NAME]
To: [ENROLLEE EMAIL ADDRESS]
Subject: 调查提醒 - 您觉得您的健保计划怎么样?

尊敬的 [ENROLLEE FIRST AND LAST NAME],

最近，我们通过电子邮件向您发送了一项有关您在 2025 年 7 月至 12 月期间使用 [QHP ISSUER NAME] 体验的问卷调查。 这份问卷调查是由美国卫生与公共服务部赞助的。**您可以点击下面的 "立即参加问卷调查"，立即在线完成此调查。**如果您已经完成了调查，感谢您的帮助，请忽略这封电子邮件。

Mail QA Requirements

- Confirm printed materials match survey proofs accepted by the Project Team

- Integrate internal staff and CMS mail seeds directly into mailing database

- Make every reasonable attempt to contact sampled enrollees, regardless of completeness of mailing address

  - Record all attempts to update mailing address

- Log all QA checks to document their completion

Mail QA Requirements (cont'd)

- Interval check at least 10% of printed mailing pieces to confirm that:
  - Materials are visually acceptable (e.g., no smearing, misalignment, or bleed-throughs)
  - All pages are included in the survey
  - Printed materials are in an easily readable font of at least 11 points
  - Survey packet has accurate content, address information, and postage
  - All the printed materials included in a survey packet or mailing envelope includes same unique identifier, match the sampled enrollee, and are in the same language
  - Number of survey packets to be mailed matches number of sampled enrollees

Collecting Data by Mail

- Send mailings according to the survey administration schedule (i.e., Day 1 to Day 34)

- Vendors are strongly encouraged to use first-class postage or indicia to facilitate timely delivery and maximize response rates

- Vendors must verify mailout dates for all materials (e.g., USPS-generated report)
  - CMS may request documentation of mailout dates from vendors

Processing Inbound Mail

- Vendors process inbound mail using key-entry or optical scanning technology
- Record or scan surveys daily to designate as "received"
  - Cease additional contacts to enrollees who return a completed survey within 24 hours
  - Track date of receipt for each survey
  - Do not permit same survey to be scanned more than once
- Do not permit out-of-range or invalid responses
- Implement QA procedures to verify consistent and accurate scanning
- Assign a final disposition code to each sampled enrollee
- ! Include final responses from mail surveys received through May 1, 2026, in final data files
  - If vendors are still fielding the survey after May 1, 2026, they should accept and process all surveys received through the end of the protocol (Day 73)
  - Mail surveys received after this date must be shredded and disposed of securely

Decision Rules

Vendors implement decision rules to resolve ambiguous coding scenarios

Scenario	Decision Rule
Mark falls between two response options, but is obviously closer to one	Select option to which mark is closest
Mark is equidistant between two response options	Code as *Missing*
Value is missing	Code as *Missing*. Do not impute a response
More than one response is marked on a question that does not have instructions to "mark one or more"	Code as *Missing*
One response is crossed out and another response option is selected	Code the corrected response option
There is writing in the margins (e.g., N/A), but a separate response is clearly marked	Code the response clearly marked
Respondent leaves all response options blank for a question with instructions to "mark one or more"	Code all response categories as "Blank/Nonresponse/No Answer" (mail and internet surveys only)

Mail Survey Skip Patterns

- Screener/gate questions determine whether an enrollee should answer subsequent questions (i.e., a skip pattern)

- Some enrollees may:
  - Answer the screener question but leave follow up questions blank
  - Answer follow up questions that do not apply to them based on response to the screener question

- Vendors do **not** edit or clean responses

9. In the last 6 months, how often were the forms from your health plan easy to fill out?
   - 1 ☐ Never
   - 2 ☐ Sometimes
   - 3 ☐ Usually
   - 4 ☐ Always
   - 99 ☒ Not Applicable; health plan did not give me forms to fill out ⟶ **If Not Applicable, go to #13**

10. In the last 6 months, how often did the health plan explain the purpose of a form before you filled it out?
    - 1 ☐ Never
    - 2 ☒ Sometimes
    - 3 ☐ Usually
    - 4 ☐ Always

Processing Undeliverable and Blank Surveys

- If a mail survey is returned **undeliverable**:
  - Make every reasonable effort to obtain a valid address
  - If unable to obtain valid address, attempt to contact enrollee by email/telephone
  - If a prenotification letter is returned undeliverable, do **<u>not</u>** contact sampled enrollee by telephone to obtain updated contact information
    - » Vendors may begin telephone phase early and assign Bad_Address_Flag if confirmation of bad address is received
- ! If a mail survey is returned **blank**:
  - Assign interim disposition code of X34 – Blank Survey Returned or Incomplete Survey
  - Do not mail a second survey; do attempt to contact during telephone phase
  - Do not assign final disposition code of X32 – Refusal unless enrollee explicitly refuses

Processing Duplicate and Ineligible Surveys

- If **duplicate** surveys are returned from the same enrollee:
  - Use the most complete survey (i.e., has most key items answered) regardless of mode
    - » If surveys are equally complete, use first survey received
- If a mail survey is returned with a note that the enrollee is **ineligible**:
  - Scan and store the survey for the required three-year period
  - Apply appropriate final ineligible disposition code based on illegibility reason (Exhibit 48):
    - » X20 – Ineligible: Deceased
    - » X40 – Ineligible: Not Eligible
    - » X43 – Do Not Survey List
    - » X22 – Language Barrier
    - » X24 – Mentally or Physically Incapacitated

Data Entry/Scanning Quality Assurance Procedures

- Review a sample of cases (recommended minimum of 10%) throughout mail protocol

- Scanning:

  – Review randomly selected hard-copy surveys and compare with the scanned entries

- Manual key-entry:

  – All surveys must be 100% rekeyed

  – Supervisors resolve discrepancies and verify correct values have been entered

  – Supervisors review a recommended minimum of 10% of cases coded by each data entry staff member

Summary of Key Updates: Mail Protocol

★ Updated years and dates, as applicable, across all mail materials

★ Updated links in the 2026 Technical Specifications to the Frequently Asked Questions document on the requirements of Section 1557

★ Specified that QR codes included in the prenotification and reminder letter must direct respondents to the survey instructions page

★ Refined simplified Chinese translation for Question 1 and Question 61

★ Revised translation of Chinese word for "Dear" in survey cover letters, prenotification letter, and reminder letter

Survey Fielding or Mail Protocol Questions?

Internet Protocol

Internet Protocol Overview

! Must be made available for entire duration of data collection period

- Vendors send three emails to enrollees with embedded log-in credentials:
  - One notification email
  - Two reminder emails

- Vendors program internet survey and emails in alignment with the templates available on MQI website
  - Content and format must not deviate from templates
  - Must follow all programming and text convention requirements described in templates and 2026 Technical Specifications
  - ! Vendors may **not** revise materials after they are accepted by CMS
    - » The Project Team notifies vendors via email once materials are accepted

- Program and test internet survey and emails before the prenotification letter is sent

Internet Staff Training

- Vendors must train all staff involved in internet processes on applicable specifications and protocols

- Training topics for internet staff include:

  – Use of relevant software

  – Role-specific QHP Enrollee Survey protocols

  – Proper handling of electronic data, including data security and storage requirements

  – QA procedures for the internet survey and emails

Programming the Internet Survey

- Optimize and test for use on mobile phones, tablets, and computers
    - ★ Survey must be compatible with iOS and Android devices and popular browsers (e.g., Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Microsoft Edge)
- Allow sampled enrollees to complete in stages
    - Save all previously completed responses
    - Allow enrollees to return to previous questions
- Do not require enrollees to answer any of the survey questions
- Program skip patterns and adhere to formatting/text conventions in internet script on MQI website
- Unless otherwise noted, program each question to accept only one response
- Include "Questions" link on each webpage (see internet script for required language)
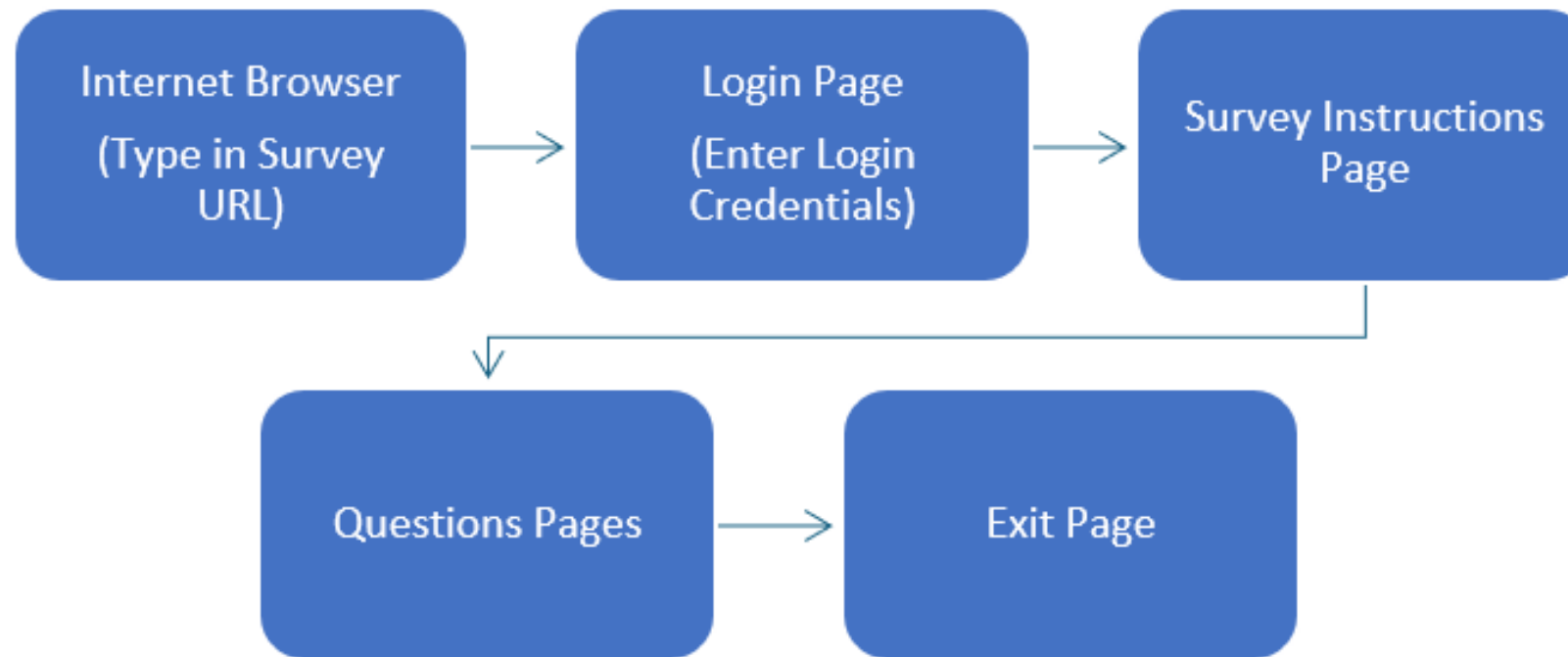
Programming the Internet Survey (cont'd)

★Program the survey instructions page to appear in the language specified by the enrollee's language protocol

- Beginning with the 2026 survey, the internet survey no longer includes a landing page that requires enrollees to select their language

- Instead, once a sampled enrollees customized log-in information is entered, they must be taken immediately to the survey instructions page in their preferred language

★Include a button that allows respondents to toggle between survey languages throughout the survey

- See Exhibit 32: Internet Survey Requirements, Exhibit 33: Internet System Requirements, Exhibit 34: Internet Security Requirements, and Exhibit 38: Internet Survey Programming Requirements in the 2026 Technical Specifications for detailed requirements for programming the internet survey

Internet Survey Sampled Enrollee Entry Process

★Depending on how sampled enrollees enter into the internet survey, they will first be directed to either the log-in page or the survey instructions page

• There are three routes of entry into the internet survey:

– Manual entry (typing) of the survey URL and log-in credentials from the prenotification/reminder letter into an internet browser

– Automatic log-in via the "Take Survey Now/Responda la encuesta ahora/立即参加问卷调查" button or via the full unique URL included in the notification and reminder emails (enrollees may click on the button/URL link or copy and paste the URL into their browser)

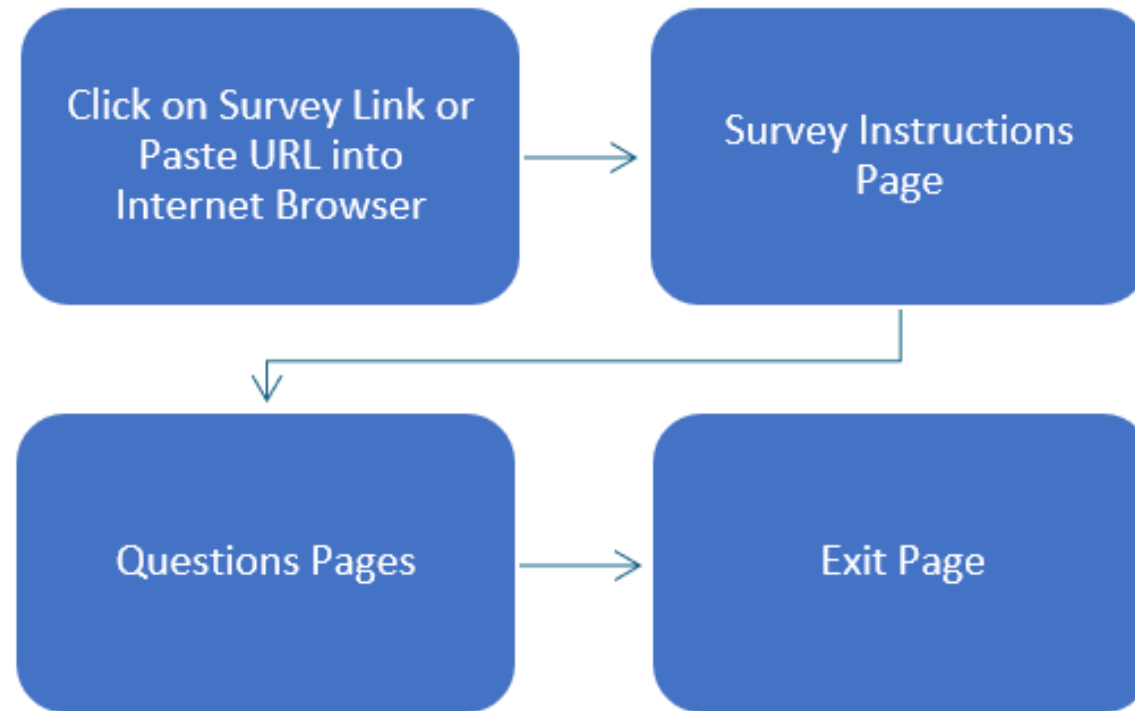– Automatic log-in via scanning the QR code on the prenotification/reminder letter.

Internet Survey Sampled Enrollee Entry Process: Manual
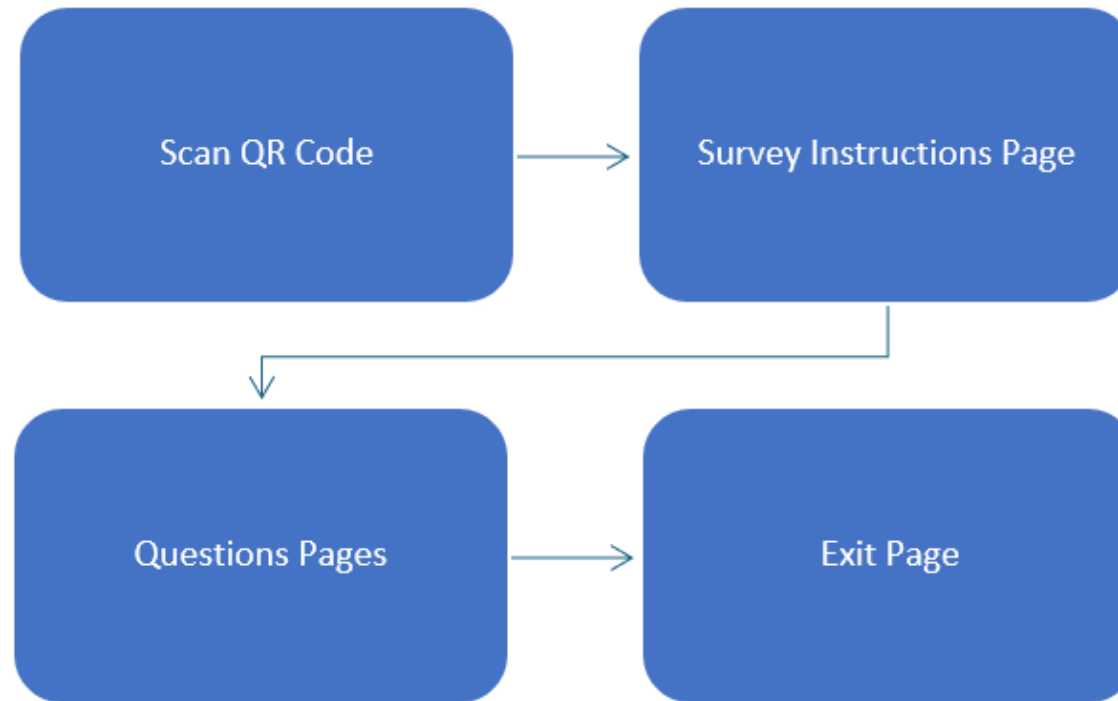
★ 2026 Technical Specifications, Exhibit 35

Internet Survey Sampled Enrollee Entry Process: Automatic (Email Links)

★ 2026 Technical Specifications, Exhibit 36

Internet Survey Sampled Enrollee Entry Process: Automatic (QR Codes)

★ 2026 Technical Specifications, Exhibit 37

Programming Notification and Reminder Emails

- Program notification and reminder emails in alignment with templates on MQI website

- Include a full, unique URL and a "Take Survey Now/Responda la encuesta ahora/立即参加问卷调查" button with embedded login credentials

- Include an "Unsubscribe" link

- Test emails ahead of fielding

- Send emails on the following days:

  – Notification email: Day 7

  – First reminder email: Day 13

  – Second reminder email: Day 19

  Note. The text for the two reminder emails is the same.

Update to Chinese Internet Script

★Refined simplified Chinese translation for Question 1 text

★Refined simplified Chinese translation for Question 65 response options

[1]   我们的记录显示，您目前加入的是{QHP Issuer Name}。是否正确？

☐ 是   [IF YES, GO TO #3]
☐ 否

[65] 您的种族为何？ *请标记一或多项*。

☐ 美国印地安人或阿拉斯加原住民
☐ 印度裔
☐ 华裔
☐ 菲律宾裔
☐ 日裔
☐ 韩裔
☐ 越南裔
☐ 其他类别的亚裔
☐ 黑人或非裔美国人
☐ 夏威夷原住民
☐ 关岛人或查莫罗人
☐ 萨摩亚人
☐ 其他类别的太平洋岛民
☐ 白种人

Update to Chinese Emails

★ Revised translation of Chinese word for "Dear" in notification and reminder emails

尊敬的 [ENROLLEE FIRST AND LAST NAME],

最近，我们通过电子邮件向您发送了一项有关您在 2025 年 7 月至 12 月期间使用 [QHP ISSUER NAME] 体验的问卷调查。 这份问卷调查是由美国卫生与公共服务部赞助的。**您可以点击下面的"立即参加问卷调查"，立即在线完成此调查。**如果您已经完成了调查，感谢您的帮助，请忽略这封电子邮件。

Internet QA Requirements

- Confirm internet survey and emails match proofs accepted by the Project Team

- Seed internal staff and CMS directly into email distribution list

- Make every reasonable attempt to contact sampled enrollees, regardless of availability of complete email address

  - It is recommended that vendors run email addresses through an email verification service prior to fielding

- Log all QA checks to document their completion

- Confirm URL and QR code correctly directs enrollees to the survey instructions page

- ★ Confirm "Take Survey Now/Responda la encuesta ahora/立即参加问卷调查" button directs enrollees to survey instructions page in the language specified by the enrollee's language protocol

Internet QA Requirements (cont'd)

- Perform interval checking of emails to:
  - Confirm emails are matched to sampled enrollee
  - Confirm variable fills match sampled enrollee information
  - Check formatting
  - Verify working links
- Check programmed internet survey ahead of fielding to:
  - Confirm adherence to internet script
  - Check formatting
  - Verify skip patterns
  - Confirm that sampled enrollees cannot complete internet survey more than once

Collecting Internet Data

- Vendors use survey response data from all internet surveys, regardless of whether the survey was explicitly submitted by the respondent

  - *Example:* If a respondent logs into the survey, answers the first 40 questions, and exits the survey without submitting their data, vendors should collect and use the data for the first 40 questions (assuming enrollee does not later complete survey by mail or telephone)

- Cease contact to enrollees who return a complete internet survey within 24 hours

Undeliverable Emails and Unsubscribe/Do Not Survey

- If an email is returned as **undeliverable:**

  – Assign Bad_Email_Flag and stop further email communications

  – Continue to contact the enrollee by mail and telephone

- If an enrollee **unsubscribes** from email notifications:

  – Remove the enrollee from further email communications (recommended that vendors remove enrollees between two and five days of the request)

  – Continue to contact the enrollee by mail and telephone

- Vendors encouraged to maintain QHP-specific unsubscribe list

Summary of Key Updates: Internet Protocol

★ Updated years and dates in internet script and email templates, as applicable

★ Revised Exhibit 32 (Internet Survey Requirements) to note that the internet survey must be compatible with Microsoft Edge

★ Revised Exhibit 32 (Internet Survey Requirements) to remove instructions for vendors to program a landing page for the internet survey – instead, sampled enrollees should be taken to the survey instructions page

★ Added a requirement to Exhibit 33 (Internet System Requirements) that specifies the internet survey must include a button that allows respondents to toggle between survey languages throughout the survey

★ Updated Exhibit 35 to reflect the revised manual entry process

★ Updated Exhibits 36 and 37 to reflect the revised automatic entry processes with email links and QR codes

★ Specified that once a sampled enrollee's customized log-in information is entered, they must be taken to the survey instructions page in their preferred language

★ Removed reference to survey "landing" page throughout the section and replaced it with survey "instructions" page

★ Removed internet survey landing page requirements from Exhibit 38

★ Refined simplified Chinese translation for Question 1 text and Question 65 response options.

Internet Protocol Questions?

Telephone Protocol
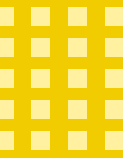
Telephone Protocol Overview

Vendors are required to:

- Program a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system that adheres to the standardized script and requirements outlined in the 2026 Technical Specifications
  - CATI scripts are available on the MQI website
  - CATI systems must follow skip patterns
  - CATI system must use consistent conventions throughout the script
- Use a secondary source (e.g., telephone matching services) to obtain or update telephone numbers for sampled enrollees in the telephone protocol
- Make up to six call attempts over 19-day period (i.e., Days 55 to 73) to enrollees who:
  - Have not returned a complete survey by any mode
  - Returned a blank/partially complete survey
  - Have an invalid/undeliverable mailing address but a valid phone number

Telephone Staff Training

- To ensure standardized data collection, vendors must train all telephone interviewers (including subcontractors) on applicable specifications and protocols

- Vendors must train telephone interviewers to:
  - Read questions and response choices verbatim
  - Probe to obtain appropriate responses
  - Maintain a professional, neutral tone
  - Minimize answer interpretation (i.e., only record answers that respondents specify)
  - Record the appropriate outcome of all call attempts
  - Operate CATI systems efficiently
  - Use of FAQs available on the MQI website
  - Refusal avoidance

Telephone Protocol Requirements

- CATI systems must:
  - Be operational by the start of survey administration to accommodate inbound requests for telephone interviews during mail/internet phases
  - Comply with federal and state laws, regulations, and guidelines
  - Link to the SMS
  - Adhere to all survey specifications and skip pattern logic
- Vendors must use secondary source to obtain updated telephone numbers for enrollees in the telephone protocol
  - **Must** update Enrollee Phone 1; may update Enrollee Phone 2 if second number received
  - Handling of attempts to multiple phone numbers left to discretion of vendor
- Vendors test CATI programming ahead of survey administration
- Vendors must adhere to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991 (TCPA) requirements set forth by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- Vendors must verify appropriate coding for telephone records, specifically, for Question 27.

Telephone Protocol Requirements (cont'd)

- Vendors must program a proxy script to allow proxy respondents to respond in place of the sampled enrollee
  - ★ Vendors **must** program pronouns for proxy interviews using the variable "Enrollee Sex", Field Position 164, of the sample frame provided by QHP issuers
  - Replace second person pronouns with third person and ensure sentences are grammatically correct
- ★ Vendors apply sex-specific language for Question 51 to 53 based on "Enrollee Sex" variable
  - » If the value in the sample frame is 2 = Female or 9 = Missing, female-specific language must be included
- ★ Vendors must implement a process, if needed, to update pronouns throughout the interview
  - – Training interviewers as necessary
  - – Programming an option to change pronouns throughout the CATI script

Question 61 (Enrollee Sex) Placement

★ Moved Question 61 from the first question in the survey to instead fall in sequence with other demographic questions

61. What is your sex?

(READ RESPONSE OPTIONS ONLY IF NECESSARY. IF READING RESPONSES, SAY: **Are you…**)

(IF THE RESPONDENT WANTS TO KNOW WHY YOU ARE ASKING ABOUT THEIR SEX, SAY: **We ask about your sex for demographic purposes only.**)

(IF RESPONDENT REPLIES WITH ANY MASCULINE RESPONSE (E.G., MALE, MASCULINE, MAN, GUY), SELECT "MALE." IF RESPONDENT REPLIES WITH ANY FEMININE RESPONSE (E.G., FEMALE, FEMININE, WOMAN, LADY), SELECT "FEMALE." IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT ANSWER WITH A RESPONSE THAT CORRESPONDS WITH "MALE" OR "FEMALE," SELECT "REFUSED.")

- 1 ☐ MALE
- 2 ☐ FEMALE

- -1 ☐ REFUSED
- -2 ☐ DON'T KNOW

62. What is the highest grade or level of school that you have completed? Is it…

(READ LIST, STOP AFTER A RESPONSE IS GIVEN.)

(FOR ANY ANSWER OTHER THAN THE RESPONSE OPTIONS BELOW, SUCH AS "TRADE SCHOOL," SAY: **We currently only have the following options.** REPEAT RESPONSE OPTIONS. **Which of these do you consider to be closest to the level of grade or school you have completed?**)

- 1 ☐ **8th grade or less,**
- 2 ☐ **Some high school, but did not graduate,**
- 3 ☐ **High school graduate or GED,**
- 4 ☐ **Some college or 2-year degree,**
- 5 ☐ **4-year college graduate, or**
- 6 ☐ **More than 4-year college degree?**

- -1 ☐ REFUSED
- -2 ☐ DON'T KNOW

Changes to CATI Script Introductions

★ Revised the INTRO1 and adjusted skip pattern to reflect revisions to Question 61 in English, Spanish, and Chinese

[INTRO1]

Hello, this is {INTERVIEWER NAME} calling on behalf of {QHP ISSUER NAME} for your feedback on your healthcare experiences with {QHP ISSUER NAME} from July through December 2025. Your answers are very important and will be used to help people compare health plans in the future. Your participation is voluntary, completely confidential, and will not affect any benefits you get. The interview should take about 10 minutes to complete. This call may be monitored or recorded for quality control purposes.

[OPTIONAL TO INCLUDE]: If this is a convenient time, I'd like to begin the interview now.

(ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.)

(IF ENROLLEE DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW NOW, SELECT OPTION 2 TO SCHEDULE A CALLBACK.)

(IF IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT ENROLLEE IS NOT MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY ABLE TO TAKE THE SURVEY, SELECT OPTION 4 TO DETERMINE IF A PROXY IS AVAILABLE. ENROLLEE MUST PROVIDE PERMISSION FOR A PROXY.)

(IF ENROLLEE IS MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY ABLE TO TAKE THE SURVEY BUT REQUESTS A PROXY, SELECT OPTION 5.)

1	YES/CONTINUE	→	[GO TO QUESTION 1]
2	NOT AVAILABLE	→	[SCHEDULE CALLBACK]
3	NO/REFUSAL	→	[CODE AS REFUSAL]
4	MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY UNABLE	→	[GO TO INTRO2]
5	NOT MENTALLY/PHSYICALLY UNABLE BUT REQUESTS A PROXY	→	[GO TO INTRO3]

Changes to CATI Script Introductions

★ Revised the INTRO2, when enrollee is physically or mentally unable to respond to the survey in English, Spanish, and Chinese

[INTRO2] If you need help to complete this interview, then a family member or friend can help if they know you well and are able to answer questions about the healthcare you received from July through December 2025. Is there someone available who could help you or who could do the interview for you?

1	YES	→	[GO TO INTRO2-1]
2	PROXY NOT AVAILABLE	→	[SCHEDULE CALLBACK]
3	NO/REFUSAL	→	[TERMINATE INTERVIEW, CODE AS MENTALLY/ PHYSICALLY INCAPABLE]

★ Revised INTRO3-1 in English, Spanish, and Chinese

[INTRO3-1] Hello, this is {INTERVIEWER NAME} calling on behalf of {QHP ISSUER NAME}for feedback on {ENROLLEE NAME}'s healthcare experiences with {QHP ISSUER NAME} from July through December 2025. {His/Her} answers are very important and will be used to help people compare health plans in the future. {His/Her} participation is voluntary, completely confidential and will not affect any benefits that {he/she} gets. The interview should take about 10 minutes to complete.

As you answer the survey questions, please remember that you are answering the questions for {him/her} and that all survey questions refer to {his/her} experiences with {his/her} health plan. Please do not consider your own experiences or information in the answers you provide. This call may be monitored or recorded for quality control purposes.

[OPTIONAL TO INCLUDE]: If this is a convenient time, I'd like to begin the interview now.

Changes to CATI Script Introductions

★ Revised the inbound telephone introduction for English, Spanish, and Chinese

[INTRO4: INBOUND REQUESTS]

Hello, {ENROLLEE'S NAME}. Thank you for your call and interest in the survey. Your participation is very important to the study and your answers will be used to help people compare health plans in the future. Before we begin, I would like to remind you that this study is about your healthcare experiences with {QHP ISSUER NAME} from July through December 2025. Your participation is voluntary, completely confidential, and will not affect any benefits you get. This interview should take about 10 minutes to complete. This call may be monitored or recorded for quality control purposes.

[OPTIONAL TO INCLUDE]: **If this is a convenient time, I'd like to begin the interview now.**

(ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.)

1	YES/CONTINUE	→	[GO TO QUESTION 1]
2	NOT AVAILABLE	→	[SCHEDULE CALLBACK]
3	NO/REFUSAL	→	[CODE AS REFUSAL]
4	MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY UNABLE	→	[GO TO INTRO2]
5	NOT MENTALLY/PHSYICALLY UNABLE BUT REQUESTS A PROXY	→	[GO TO INTRO3]

Telephone QA Requirements

- At minimum, vendors must:

  – Review and confirm telephone script matches previously accepted screenshots

  – Verify CATI system correctly follows skip patterns and programming specifications

  – Test each response option (including "Don't Know" and "Refused") to confirm skip pattern logic

  – Verify capacity to support dialing volume (including additional languages)

  – Make every reasonable attempt to contact nonrespondents

Outbound Telephone Attempts

- Vendors make up to six telephone attempts to nonrespondents at different times of day, on different days of the week, and in different weeks over 19-day dialing period

- Definition of a Telephone Attempt:
  - Phone rings six times with no answer
  - Interviewer reaches voicemail
  - Interviewer reaches household or sampled enrollee, but enrollee is not available
    - » Interviewer attempts to schedule callback
  - Interviewer reaches a busy signal (up to three busy signals in a day may equal one attempt)
  - Interviewer placed on hold

- Vendors may leave up to two voicemail messages for sampled enrollees (review HIPAA requirements and document processes in QAP)

Inbound Telephone Interview Requests

- Vendors must accommodate enrollee requests to take the survey over the phone throughout survey administration

- If interviewer not available at time of inbound request, schedule a callback

- If enrollee not available at the time of a callback:
  - Make at least one additional attempt on the next day at the same time
  - If survey not conducted, continue standard mail, internet, and telephone protocols
  - Callback attempts do **not** count towards the six required telephone attempts

Telephone Data Processing Requirements

- Include unique ID number for each enrollee in SMS and final data file

- Enter interview date in SMS and link interviews to appropriate variables (i.e., language, date)

- Remove all PII and protected health information (PHI) when data is transferred to final data file

- Assign final disposition code and include in final data file

- Review data files for accuracy
  – Compare responses from completed interviews directly from CATI system to corresponding responses in final data file
  – Recommended to review a minimum of 10%

Telephone Interviewer Monitoring

★ CMS remotely monitors live interviews during survey fielding for oversight purposes through telephone interview monitoring sessions

! Vendors must silently monitor at least 10% of all interviews for each survey language

- Must be conducted throughout entire telephone phase

- Monitor both attempts and completed interviews

- Callbacks permitted, but do not count towards the 10% monitoring requirement

- Document outcomes using standard templates

! Vendors must not infer the respondent's answers

• Supervisory staff conduct "floor rounding" to assess professionalism

! For vendors using telephone subcontractors:

- A combined total of 10% of interviews must be monitored by the vendor and/or subcontractor
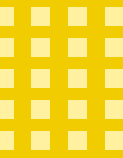
Data Collection Considerations

- **Disenrollees:** Individuals who indicate they are no longer enrolled in the QHP
  - Discontinue contact across all modes to these individuals
  - Assign final disposition of X40 – Ineligible
- **Proxy Respondents:** Someone who completes the survey on the enrollee's behalf
  - Vendors must modify CATI system programming to accommodate proxy interviews
  - Proxy permitted if a sampled enrollee is unable to respond to the survey
    - » Enrollee must consent to a proxy taking a survey on their behalf
    - » Proxy must be familiar with enrollee's health
  - If enrollee is physically/mentally unable to respond to the survey and unable/unwilling to grant permission to a proxy:
    - » Assign final disposition of X24 – Mentally or Physically Incapacitated

Summary of Key Updates: Telephone Protocol

★ Updated years and dates, as applicable

★ Specified vendors must program pronouns in the CATI system using the enrollee sex from the sample frame

★ Moved Question 61 from the first question in the survey to instead fall in sequence with other demographic questions

★ Clarified CMS remotely monitors live interviews through telephone interview monitoring sessions

★ Shortened the CATI Script introductions in all languages

Telephone Protocol Questions?

Customer Support

Customer Support Overview

! Vendors must establish customer support toll-free telephone number and project-specific email address

! Must be operational by start of the mail phase and available for entire data collection period

- Requirements:
  - Answer at least 90% of incoming calls live within 30 seconds during regular business hours
  - Available in all fielded languages (i.e., English, Spanish, and Chinese [if applicable])
  - Program voicemailbox in all fielded languages
  - Return voicemail and respond to email inquiries within 24 hours or one business day
  - Track number of requests for language other than English, Spanish, or Chinese
  - Document and track all customer support inquiries
  - Test customer support systems ahead of survey fielding

Customer Support Staff Training

- Vendors train customer support staff on:
  - QHP Enrollee Survey requirements and methodology
  - Procedures for transferring calls to telephone interviewers or scheduling callbacks
  - Frequently Asked Questions document
    - » Available on MQI website in English, Spanish, and Chinese
    - ★ Revised FAQ for 2026 to simplify and clarify responses provided to enrollees
- Customer Support Agent and Interviewer Guidance (Appendix D) provides guidance on best practices for customer support agents

Customer Support QA Requirements

- To reduce survey fielding errors and facilitate high quality customer support, vendors must:
  - Review at least 10% of customer support responses to confirm accuracy and professionalism
  - Confirm responses for all fielded languages are provided within 24 hours or one business day
  - Confirm that all requests for scheduled telephone surveys are met

Summary of Key Updates: Customer Support

★ Revised FAQ to simplify and clarify responses provided to enrollees

Customer Support Questions?

BREAK
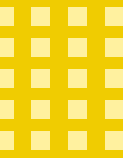
Data Coding, File Specifications, and Submission

Data Coding, Specifications, and Submission Overview

- Data coding and file specifications
  - Processing written text responses
  - Determining enrollee eligibility
  - Key items and complete survey definition
  - Disposition codes
  - Survey round variables
  - Data dictionary
  - Quality assurance procedures
- Data submission process

Note. See Section 17: Code and submit data for detailed data coding and submission requirements.

Data Coding and File Specifications

Processing Written Text Responses

- Vendors submit open-ended responses to Question 2 in data files

- Enter responses exactly as written

- Redact PII and PHI (e.g., only submit the QHP name in the data submission file)

- Do not edit or correct misspellings

- Include enrollees who wrote in only a product type (e.g., HMO, POS, PPO, EPO) as eligible regardless of whether product type aligns with associated reporting unit

2. What is the name of your health plan?

Please print:

Note. See Exhibit 52 for additional detail.

Determining Enrollee Eligibility

- Questions 1 and 2 determine enrollee eligibility
  - See Exhibit 53 for detailed guidelines
- QHP issuers provide list of common plan name aliases
  - See Exhibit 54 for additional common valid/invalid plan aliases
- If an enrollee's response to Question 2 varies significantly from list of common aliases, they are considered ineligible
- Telephone interview scripts must accommodate enrollee eligibility rules

1. Our records show that you are now in the health plan named on the front page. Is that right?

   [1] ☐ Yes ⟶ **If Yes, go to #3**

   [2] ☐ No

2. What is the name of your health plan?

   Please print:

   _____

   _____

   _____

Key Survey Items

- 2026 QHP Enrollee Survey has 19 key items

  – See Exhibit 57 for a complete list of key items

- Key items are survey questions that all respondents are eligible to answer, excluding the "About You" items

Definition of a Complete Survey

- **Complete Survey:** Sampled enrollee answers ≥50% (at least 10) of the key items
  - Vendors make no additional attempts to enrollees who return a complete survey
- **Partially Complete Survey:** Enrollee answers <50% of the key items
  - Required to continue following up with enrollee to obtain complete survey
- If an enrollee completes more than one survey:
  - Use survey with most key items answered (regardless of survey mode)
  - If equally complete, use first survey received
- If an enrollee is deceased:
  - Do not retain data if completed by someone else after death
  - Retain data if completed by enrollee prior to death

Disposition Codes

- Designate survey status for each enrollee

! Vendors must maintain up-to-date, accurate disposition codes

- Interim disposition codes

  – Represent current survey status

  – Used for internal tracking purposes

  ! Include crosswalk of interim to final disposition codes in QAP

- Final disposition codes

  – Represent final survey status of enrollees

  – Assigned prior to data submission

Note. Exhibit 55 includes final disposition codes and guidelines for coding the Date_Complete variable.

Final Disposition Codes

Code	Description	Date_Complete Guidelines
M10, I10, or T10	Completed survey	Code as date completed survey was received or administered
M31, I31, or T31	Partially completed survey	Code as date partially completed survey was received or administered
X20	Ineligible: Deceased	Code as date it is determined enrollee is deceased
X40	Ineligible: Not Eligible	Code as date it is determined enrollee does not meet all required eligibility criteria for being included in survey sample
X43	Do Not Survey List	Code as first date of fielding for reporting unit
X22	Language Barrier	Code as date it is determined that a language barrier prevents the sampled enrollee from completing the survey
X24	Mentally or Physically Incapacitated	Code as date it is determined a mental or physical incapacity or institutionalization prevents the sampled enrollee from completing the survey
X32	Refusal	Code as date sampled enrollee or proxy refuses to complete survey (verbally or in writing)
X33	Nonresponse after Maximum Attempts	Code as last date of fielding for the reporting unit
X34	Blank Survey Returned or Incomplete Survey	Code as date the blank survey or incomplete survey was received or administered
X35	Bad Contact Information	Code as latest date it is determined that contact information is not viable

Note. See Exhibit 55 for additional detail.

Survey Round Variables

- Must be assigned to each sampled individual

- Provide detail on which round of outreach a mail or telephone survey was completed or partially completed

- Must be associated with mailed questionnaire or call attempt in which data were collected

- For disposition codes other than M10/T10/I10 or M31/T31/I31, code Survey Round as NC

- For I10 and I31 disposition codes, code Survey Round as IN

Survey Round	Description	Disposition Codes
M1	Respondent completely/partially completed first mail questionnaire	M10, M31
M2	Respondent completely/partially completed second mail questionnaire	M10, M31
T1–T6	Respondent completed/partially completed survey during the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth telephone attempt, respectively	T10, T31
TN	Respondent completed/partially completed survey during inbound call	T10, T31
IN	Respondent completed/partially completed internet survey	I10, I31
NC	Used for all final disposition codes that are not M/T/I10 or M/T/I31	X20, X40, X43, X22, X24, X32, X33, X34, X35

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary

★ Added new variable: SF_Has_Claim

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
SF_Has_Claim		Enrollee had at least one claim or encounter with the QHP issuer during the measurement year. A health care claim or encounter is defined as one of the following: • A request to obtain payment, and the necessary accompanying information from a health care provider to a health plan, for health care. • Transmission of encounter information for the purpose of reporting health care, if there is no direct claim.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing	Num	1

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary

★ Added new variable: SF_Has_PCP

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
SF_Has_PCP		Enrollee had an assigned primary care provider during the measurement year. A primary care provider is a physician or nonphysician (e.g., nurse practitioner, physician assistant, certified nurse midwife) who offers primary care medical services. Licensed practical nurses and registered nurses are not considered primary care providers.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing	Num	1

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary (cont'd)

★ Added new variable: SF_Has_Specialist

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
SF_Has_Specialist		Enrollee had at least one visit with a specialty care doctor during the measurement year. A specialty care doctor (i.e., physician) is defined as a surgeon, heart doctor, allergy doctor, skin doctor and other doctor who specializes in one area of health care. Do not include dental visits.	1 = Yes 2 = No 9 = Missing	Num	

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary (cont'd)

★ Added notes for Name_Health_Plan and Internet_Browser

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
Name_Health_Plan	2	What is the name of your health plan?	Text Response -1 = Refused (phone only) -2 = Don't know (phone only) -3 = Blank/Nonresponse/No answer -4 = Appropriate skip **Note:** Vendors must redact all personally identifiable information provided by respondents. ★Vendors must truncate responses to 250 characters or less.	Char	250
Internet_Browser		Type of browser respondent used to complete internet-based survey	1 = Chrome 2 = Safari 3 = Firefox 4 =★ Microsoft Edge 5 = Other 6 = Unknown 7 = Not applicable (mail or phone only) 9 = Not applicable (nonrespondent) ★ **Note:** Code 6 = Unknown can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission.	Num	1

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary (cont'd)

★ Added notes for Internet_Opt_In and Internet_Device_Type

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
Internet_Opt_In		Method by which respondent opted into internet survey regardless of the mode of survey completion	1 = Email 2 = Letter (URL) 3 = QR code 4 = Unknown 5 = Not applicable (mail or phone only) 9 = Not applicable (nonrespondent) ★ **Note:** Code 4 = Unknown, can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission	Num	1
Internet_Device_Type		Type of device respondent used to complete internet-based survey	1 = Mac 2 = PC 3 = Mobile phone 4 = Tablet 5 = Unknown 6 = Not applicable (mail or phone only) 9 = Not applicable (nonrespondent) ★ **Note:** Code 5 = Unknown can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission.	Num	1

Key Updates: Appendix F – Data Dictionary (cont'd)

★ Added note for Response_Time

Field	Question Number	Description	Valid Values	Data Type	Max Field Size
Response_Time		Number of minutes respondent took to complete the survey (phone or internet mode only)	001–999 -1 = Not ascertained (phone or internet only) -2 = Not applicable (mail only) -9 = Not applicable (nonrespondent) Note: Response times must be reported in a 3-digit format (i.e., if the interview took 12 minutes, then the vendor should enter this as "012"). ★**Note:** Code -1 = Not ascertained (phone or internet only), can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission. **Note:** Response times of less than 1 minute should be coded as "001."	Num	3

Data Dictionary (Appendix F): Use of Unknown Values

- Vendors encountering the "unknown" value for the following fields: Internet_Browser, Internet_Device_Type, Internet_Opt_In, and Response_Time, must:

  ★ Notify the Project Team via the QHP_Survey@air.org

  ★ Obtain approval **before** the use of the "unknown" value during vendor's internal review process or by no later than **May 1, 2025**

- ★ The Project Team will inform its decision within 3 business days

QA Procedures

! Ongoing QA checks for data files:

 – Run frequencies and count distributions on administration and response data

 – Check data processing programs to confirm proper coding

 – Verify surveys are assigned a complete/partially complete disposition code

 – Review disposition codes for discrepancies between presence of response data and assignment of ineligible/nonresponse final disposition codes

 – Select and review a sample of coded cases (recommended minimum of 10%)

 – Compare hardcopy responses to scanned responses to responses entered in data files (recommended minimum of 10%)

 – Calculate and review response rates on periodic basis

Note. Checks must be performed by a different staff member than the individual who originally performed the task.

QA Procedures (cont'd)

! Question 2 QA checks:

– Review all plan aliases provided for Q2 and evaluate whether these responses (in conjunction with Q1 responses) render the sampled enrollee as eligible or ineligible

– Review Q2 responses for:

» Double quotes

» Tabbed spacing

» Line breaks

» Double spaces between words and after periods

QA Procedures (cont'd)

! Question 27 QA checks:

– Review question 27 coding for telephone records

» Split into Q27A and Q27B for telephone only

– Report only a single value for Q27

27A. In the last 6 months, how many times did you visit your personal doctor to get care for yourself? Include in-person, telephone, or video appointments.

(READ RESPONSE OPTIONS ONLY IF NECESSARY. IF READING RESPONSES, SAY: **Would you say…**)

(IF RESPONDENT IS CONFUSED ABOUT "NOT APPLICABLE," SAY: **Not applicable because you do not have a personal doctor?**)

0	NONE	→	[IF NONE, GO TO #27B]
1	1 TIME	→	[IF 1 TIME, GO TO #28]
2	2	→	[IF 2, GO TO #28]
3	3	→	[IF 3, GO TO #28]
4	4	→	[IF 4, GO TO #28]
5	5 TO 9 TIMES	→	[IF 5 TO 9 TIMES, GO TO #28]
6	10 OR MORE TIMES, OR	→	[IF 10 OR MORE TIMES, GO TO #28]
-5	NOT APPLICABLE?	→	[IF NOT APPLICABLE, GO TO #40]
-1	REFUSED	→	[IF REFUSED, GO TO #40]
-2	DON'T KNOW	→	[IF DON'T KNOW, GO TO #40]

27B. Is that because you have a personal doctor but did not visit them in the last 6 months, or is that because you do not have a personal doctor?

(READ RESPONSE OPTIONS ONLY IF NECESSARY. IF READING RESPONSES, SAY: **Would you say…**)

0	YOU HAVE A PERSONAL DOCTOR BUT DID NOT VISIT THEM IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS; OR	→	[GO TO #40]
-5	YOU DO NOT HAVE A PERSONAL DOCTOR?	→	[GO TO #40]
-1	REFUSED	→	[IF REFUSED, GO TO #40]
-2	DON'T KNOW	→	[IF DON'T KNOW, GO TO #40]

Calculating the Response Rate

Response Rate: Total number of completed surveys divided by the total number of sampled enrollees selected for the survey sample

$$Response\ Rate\ (RR) = \frac{C}{(C + E) + (R + O) + (X * U)}$$

Where:

- C = Completed Surveys (disposition code 10)

- E = Partially Completed Surveys (disposition code 31)

- U = Cases with Unknown Eligibility (disposition codes 33, 34, and 35)

- O = Other Disposition (disposition codes 22 and 24)

- R = Refusal (disposition code 32 or 43)

- I = Ineligible (disposition code 20 or 40)

- X = Proportion of cases eligible for this survey, which is calculated as:

$$X = \frac{C + E}{C + E + I + O + R}$$

Note. The response rate formula is based on the standard definitions established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, specifically the Response Rate 3 formula.

Summary of Key Updates: Data Coding and File Specifications

★ Made the following updates to Exhibit F-1 (Data Dictionary File Layout):

- Noted that "unknown" codes can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission for the Internet Opt In, Internet Device Type, Internet Browser, and Response Time variables

- Updated the valid values for Internet Browser to specify Microsoft Edge in Exhibit F-1 (Data Dictionary File)

- Noted that -1 = Not ascertained (phone or internet only) for the Response Time variable can only be used with permission from the QHP Project Team prior to data submission

- Revised "Name_Health_Plan" field to note vendors must truncate responses to 250 characters or less

- Added three new variables (SF_Has_Claim, SF_Has_PCP, SF_Has_Specialist)

Data Submission

Data Submission Process

- Vendors submit test and final data files to CMS via the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#)
  - Vendors must register to access the website
  - Vendors send one data submission summary log per ZIP file to QHP_Survey@air.org, specifying the date the file was uploaded to the QHP Enrollee Survey website
  - Vendors are strongly encouraged to submit final data files early in the data submission period
- Data submission training: **February 26, 2026**
  - Provides complete instructions for accessing the QHP Enrollee Survey website and submitting test and final data files
  - ★ Project Manager, Sampling Manager, and Information System personnel are required to attend
  - ★ Subcontractor attendance is optional
- Contact the Project Team for technical support: QHP_Survey@air.org

Data Submission Process (cont'd)

- Vendors produce one CSV data file for each reporting unit
- Naming convention for data files:
  - An uploaded ZIP file may contain multiple test data files with the following naming convention: <Reporting Unit ID>.csv
  - To assist with tracking multiple submissions, ZIP files should use the following naming convention: <VendorName>_Submission_<Letter>.zip
    - o For example, vendors should use <VendorName>_Submission_A.zip for the first ZIP file, <VendorName>_Submission_B.zip for the second ZIP file, and so on
    - o Emailed data submission summary logs should use the following naming convention: <VendorName>_Submission_<Letter>_Log.xlsx
- The Project Team will reject an entire ZIP file if any CSV files within the ZIP file violate the CSV naming convention

Data Submission Process (cont'd)

! Test data submission: April 8–10, 2026

  – Submit at least one unencrypted test ZIP file containing files for at least two reporting units, including at least 100 records across the two reporting units

  – Test files may include >100 records; may submit more than two files

  – Email the Project Team one data submission summary log per ZIP file, specifying the date the file was uploaded to the [QHP Enrollee website](#)

• Final data submission: May 8–15, 2026

  – Files received late will be excluded from QRS and public reporting

  – Vendors are strongly encouraged to submit final data files early in the data submission period

• Data resubmission: May 18–20, 2026

  – Should the Project Team identify errors in final submitted data files, vendors must correct errors and resubmit data within three business days of request

Data Coding, Specifications, and Submission Questions?

Data Analysis and Public Reporting

Data Analysis and Public Reporting Overview

- CMS analyzes data

- Vendor analysis and reporting

- QI reports

- QRS measures

Note. See Sections 18 for detailed data analysis and public reporting information.

CMS Analyzes Data

- CMS cleans vendor-submitted data using a forward-cleaning approach, meaning "screener" item responses control how subsequent items are treated

- Depending on responses to "screener" items, CMS may:
  - Retain original responses for subsequent/dependent items
  - Set responses to subsequent/dependent items to a missing value

- CMS concatenates cleaned data files into a single person-level analytic data file and calculates survey composite and individual item scores for each reporting unit using analysis code based on the CAHPS® macro

- Vendors **never** clean or recode survey response data

Vendor Analysis and Reporting

- Vendors may provide reporting-unit level datasets for questions 3–67 and the final disposition code breakdown to QHP issuers

  – **Must** communicate that vendor scores are **not** official CMS scores

  – **May not** provide member-level datasets to QHP issuers

- Vendors may submit deidentified member-level datasets to regulatory agencies on behalf of QHP issuer clients (e.g., states and state insurance commissioners)

  – May include person-level responses for questions 3–10, 19–24, and 26–43

  ! May include reporting unit identification number <reporting-unit-id> from sample frame

  – **May not** include person-level responses for questions 1–2, 11–18, 25, and 44–67

  ! **May not** include information from sample frame or sampled enrollee list (except for reporting unit identification number)

QI Reports

- CMS produces quality improvement (QI) reports for all reporting units that field the 2026 survey
  - Includes results for QHP Enrollee Survey global ratings, composite measures, and preventative services
  - Largely aligns with CAHPS 5.0H composite structure
  - Contains indicators if scores are significantly lower, higher, or similar to national-level score benchmarks
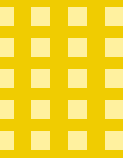- Reports available to issuers via CMS HIOS-MQM website

QRS Measures

- The QRS subset of measures from the QHP Enrollee Survey includes:

  – Access to care

  – Access to information

  – Care coordination

  – Plan administration

  – Rating of all health care, personal doctor, and specialist

  – Smoking and tobacco use cessation

  ★ Enrollee experience with cost

- Survey-based measures are combined with records-based measures of medical care and plan administration to create overall star ratings of plans

★Exhibit 65: Crosswalk of QHP Enrollee Survey Questions Included in the Quality Rating System

2026 QRS Survey Measure	2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Composite or Individual Question	Question Number	Question Source
Access to Care	Getting Care Quickly	21	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
		22	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
	Getting Needed Care	24	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
		40	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
Access to Information	Access to Information	3	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 4.0—Supplemental Items (HEDIS®)
		4	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 4.0—Supplemental Items (HEDIS®)
		5	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 4.0—Supplemental Items (HEDIS®)
Care Coordination	Care Coordination	32	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
		33	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
		34	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
		35	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
		38	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
		42	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
Enrollee Experience with Cost	Enrollee Experience with Cost	13	Question developed for QHP Enrollee Survey
		14	Question developed for QHP Enrollee Survey
		15	Question developed for QHP Enrollee Survey
		16	Question developed for QHP Enrollee Survey
Plan Administration	Plan Administration	6	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
		7	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
	Individual Question (Plan Administration)	8	Question developed for QHP Enrollee Survey
	Individual Question (Plan Administration)	9	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
	Individual Question (Plan Administration)	10	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0—Supplemental Items
Rating of All Health Care	Individual Question	26	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0
Rating of Health Plan	Individual Question	19	CAHPS® Health Plan Survey 5.0

Data Analysis and Public Reporting Questions?

Quality Oversight

Overview

- Quality oversight activities

- Data submission activities

- Project reporting

- Technical support

Note. See Sections 19 for detailed quality oversight requirements.

Quality Oversight Activities

- The Project Team conducts oversight of all vendors to facilitate compliance with survey protocols

- All vendors and subcontractors (if applicable) must participate

- Vendors submit all reports and materials to QHP_Survey@air.org unless otherwise specified

! Project Team activities are **<u>not</u>** a substitute for the vendor's own quality assurance activities

Before Survey Administration

Oversight Activity	Deadline
Mail material review	October 10, 2025
Report #1: Quality Assurance Plan (QAP)	October 17, 2025
Internet material review	October 31, 2025
Telephone screenshot review	November 14, 2025
Data record review*	December 2025
Telephone script review sessions	Mid to late January 2026

*Returning vendors only.

Mail Material Review

- Submit final, print-ready templates for prenotification letters, first and second survey cover letters, reminder letters, questionnaires, outbound envelope, and business reply envelope
  - English and Spanish required; Chinese if applicable
  - Submit in PDF format
  - Due **Friday, October 10, 2025**
- Common findings:
  - Incorrect font and font size
  - Incorrect formatting
  - Mismatch of customer support telephone number, hours, and local time zone across materials
- Project Team provides feedback within 10 business days
- Vendors submit revisions within 10 business days of request
- ! Vendors may **<u>not</u>** revise materials after they are accepted by CMS
  - The Project Team notifies vendors via email once materials are accepted

Report #1: Quality Assurance Plan (QAP)

- Documents vendor compliance with survey protocols and 2026 Technical Specifications

★ All approved vendors are required to submit a QAP regardless of QHP issuer client contracting status

- Must follow the Model QAP template (Appendix C)
  - Clearly label each item and present information in specified order
  - ★ Describe planned remote operations, if applicable, including: key personnel involved; system resources; procedures for security, enrollee confidentiality, remote access, data transmittal, risk mitigation, quality assurance, and staff oversight for remote staff
  - Submit as Microsoft Word document
  - Returning vendors submit previously accepted QAPs in track changes

- Due **Friday, October 17, 2025**

Report #1: QAP (cont'd)

- Project Team provides feedback within 10 business days

- Vendors submit revisions within 10 business days of request

- Project Team conducts conference calls to discuss QAPs, if needed

- Common findings
  - Outdated protocols
  - Missing detail regarding additional language protocols and oversight
  - Incomplete organizational chart (e.g., missing subcontractors)

! Acceptance of QAP does not constitute CMS's approval or endorsement of vendor processes

Internet Material Review

- Submit internet survey URL, with at least:

  ★18 usernames and/or passwords that replicate how internet survey log-in credentials appear on mail letters

  ★18 unique URLs with embedded log-in credentials that replicate embedded log-in credentials that appear in email notifications

  ★18 unique QR codes that automatically log-in respondents to the survey

- English and Spanish required; Chinese if applicable

- Due **Friday, October 31, 2025**

Internet Material Review (cont'd)

- Common findings:
  - Missing or nonworking FAQ link
  - Mismatch of customer support telephone number, hours, and local time zone across materials
- Project Team provides feedback within 15 business days
- Vendors submit revisions within 5 business days of request
- ! Vendors may **not** revise materials after they are accepted by CMS
  - The Project Team notifies vendors via email once materials are accepted

Telephone Screenshot Review

- Submit screenshots of programmed telephone interviewing script
  - Submit in PDF format
  - One question per page preferred
- English and Spanish required; Chinese if applicable
- Due **Friday, November 14, 2025**

Telephone Screenshot Review (cont'd)

- Common findings:
  - Missing or incorrect instructions and/or probes
  - Missing emphasis
  - Missing screenshots of female-specific language for Questions 51 to 53
- Project Team provides feedback within 10 business days
- Vendors submit revisions within five business days of request
- ! Vendors may **<u>not</u>** revise materials after they are accepted by CMS
  - The Project Team notifies vendors via email once materials are accepted

Data Record Review

- Conducted remotely with returning vendors

- Tracks person-level records through vendor SMS during each phase of administration (i.e., from sample file receipt through data submission) and confirms:

  – Data files and source materials are easily retrievable

  – Accurate application of disposition codes and other variables

  – Accurate response coding based on source files

- Project Team provides case IDs for review one business day prior to session

- Timeframe: **December 2025**

  – Project Team may conduct additional reviews with new or returning vendors during fielding, as needed

Telephone Script Review

- Project Team reviews telephone script programming after acceptance of telephone screenshots

- Occurs via web conferencing or independently via remote access
  - Vendors provide temporary CATI log-in credentials for independent reviews

- Review skip pattern logic and alignment with accepted materials

- English and Spanish required; Chinese if applicable

! Notify Project Team ahead of session if the Spanish and/or Chinese scripts are overlaid onto the English programming

- Session required with each subcontractor

- Project Team holds additional session to verify revisions, if needed

- Timeframe: **January 2026**

During Survey Administration

Oversight Activity	Timeframe
Seeded Mail and Email Review	February–April 2026
Remote Visits	March 2026
Customer Support Review	March 2026
Test Data Submission	April 8–10, 2026
Telephone Interviewer Monitoring	April 2026

Seeded Mailings

- Assess timeliness of delivery, accuracy and readability of materials, and functionality of internet survey links/log-in credentials

! Seed Project Team and at least one internal staff member directly in survey mailing database

  – Project Team address is included in the 2026 Technical Specifications

! Seed one reporting unit for each language implemented

- If using multiple print/mail facilities and/or subcontractors, seed Project Team in one reporting unit at each facility in each language administered

Seeded Emails

- Assess timeliness of delivery, accuracy of email and internet survey content, and survey link/log-in credential functionality

! Seed Project Team (QHP_Survey@air.org) directly into email protocol for one reporting unit in English, Spanish, and Chinese (if applicable)

! If "double-stuffing" emails, do not send English-only, Spanish-only, or Chinese-only emails

- Ensure all fills (e.g., QHP issuer logo, enrollee first and last name, QHP issuer name, and title of senior executive from vendor/QHP issuer) are appropriately populated

Remote Visits

- Conducted via web conferencing

- Evaluate vendor's compliance with QHP Enrollee Survey requirements

- Review items may include:
  - Survey management system
  - Enrollee confidentiality and data security
  - Sampling protocols
  - Data collection protocol (mail, internet, and telephone) and related facilities
  - Data coding and submission
  - Customer support
  - Timeframe: **March 2026**

Customer Support Review

- Project Team anonymously contacts vendor customer support telephone lines and email addresses and asks standard set of questions from FAQs (on the [MQI website](#) in English, Spanish, and Chinese)

- Assess responses for timeliness, accuracy, and alignment with FAQs and Telephone Customer Support Agent and Interviewer Guidance (Appendix D)

- May review systems in Spanish and Chinese (if applicable)

- Common findings:
  - Incorrect responses
  - Calls consistently not answered live
  - Email responses not provided within required 24-hour timeframe

- Train customer support agents on revised FAQs

- Timeframe: **March 2026**

Telephone Interview Monitoring

- Silent monitoring conducted via web conferences

- Assess interviewer compliance with telephone specifications

- Project Team will work with vendors to determine session frequency and duration based on call volume

! Ensure telephone interviewers are trained to:

 – Properly probe during interviews

 – Read the telephone script verbatim

 – Follow interviewer instructions

- Timeframe: **April 2026**

Data Submission Activities

Activity	Timeframe
Data Submission Training	February 26, 2026
Test Data Submission	April 8-10, 2026
Final Data Submission	May 8-15, 2026
Data Resubmission	May 18-20 , 2026

Test Data Submission

- Project Team hosts data submission training on February 26, 2026

- Vendors submit test data files via the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#)

  - Website registration required

- Test Data Submission Timeframe: **April 8–10, 2026**

  - Project Team reviews test data files for coding accuracy and notifies vendors of errors, if applicable

Final Data Submission and Data Resubmission

- Submit all final data files via the [QHP Enrollee Survey website](#)

- Submitted data must pass initial website validation checks *and* Project Team QA checks

- Project Team notifies vendors of validation errors and requests data resubmission, as needed

- Vendors resubmit revised data files, as needed, within three business days of request

- Final Data Submission Timeframe: **May 8–15, 2026**

- Data Resubmission Timeframe: **May 18–20, 2026**

Ongoing Oversight Activities

Oversight Activity	Timeframe
Exception Requests	Ongoing, as needed
Discrepancy Reports	Ongoing, as needed
Corrective Action Plans	Ongoing, as needed
Technical Support	Ongoing, as needed

Exception Requests

- Submit exception requests to QHP_Survey@air.org prior to fielding for any variations from 2026 Technical Specifications and survey requirements

  - Includes variations in operations, survey materials, and other alternative approaches

- Form available on MQI website

  - Complete entire form with sufficient detail

  - ★ Form has been revised for 2026 so that vendors may submit requests for multiple exceptions within one Exception Request Form

! Project Team must accept Exception Request Form before implementation (acceptance valid for one year)

★ Project Team no longer requires vendors to submit an exception request for remote operations

  - Vendors planning to implement remote operations must provide sufficient detail regarding operationalization and oversight of remote operations in their QAP

Discrepancy Reports

- Required for any survey administration errors or deviations from the 2026 Technical Specifications and survey requirements

- Template available on [MQI website](#)

! Submit initial report to QHP_Survey@air.org within 24 hours of discrepancy discovery

! Submit a second report within two weeks of initial report if all required information is not immediately available

- Complete entire form in sufficient detail

Corrective Action Plan

- Issued when vendor:
  - Fails to demonstrate adherence to protocols and guidelines
  - Experiences ongoing problems during fielding
- Schedule and status determined by CMS
- Potential outcomes for continued noncompliance:
  - Loss of "approved" status to administer the QHP Enrollee Survey
  - Increased oversight of vendor activities
  - Adjustment to publicly reported scores, as needed
  - Other sanctions, as deemed appropriate by CMS

Vendor Oversight Reports

Submit all reports to QHP_Survey@air.org

- Subject Line: [VENDOR NAME] Report [#] Submission (e.g., XYZ Inc. Report #1 Submission)

Report	Activity	Content	Due Date
#1	Vendor QAP	• Addresses all required elements of survey administration	October 17, 2025
#2	Preliminary QHP Client List	• Client list for reconciliation • Oversampling requests	January 7, 2026
#3	Final QHP Client List	• Final QHP client list • Sample frame receipt status	February 6, 2026
#4	Interim Progress Report	• Fielding status for each QHP reporting unit • Summary of customer support calls and emails • Count of other additional language requests	April 3, 2026
#5	Final Report	• Discussion of survey implementation and lessons learned • Count of other additional language requests and summary of languages requested • Recommendations for future survey administration years	May 22, 2026

Summary of Key Updates: Quality Oversight

★ All vendors must submit a QAP regardless of QHP issuer client contracting status

★ Vendors are required to submit 18 unique URLs with login credentials and 18 unique QR codes for internet material review

★ Vendors may submit multiple exception requests with one Exception Request Form

★ Vendors are no longer required to submit an exception request for remote operations, but must detail any remote operation processes and oversight in their QAPs

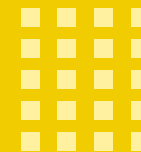# Vendor Quality Oversight Questions?
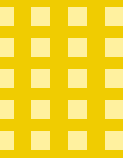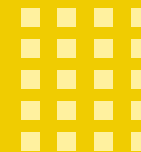
Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Next Steps

- Training Evaluation
  - Vendors will receive an email following training with instructions to complete the training evaluation
  - Designate **one** person from your organization to complete the evaluation
  - Completion required to obtain final approval
  - Due: **Tuesday, September 30, 2025**
- Final approval notifications will be sent **by Thursday, October 2, 2025**
- Training slides and the final approved vendor list to be posted on the <u>MQI website</u>

Final Questions?

Thank You!

Appendix

2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline

Task	Date
Conditionally approved vendors contract with QHP issuers	September–December 2025
2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Vendor Training	September 25, 2025
Vendors notified of final approval status	October 2, 2025
CMS conducts remote data record review for returning vendors	December 2025
Survey Materials: Vendors submit: • **Mail:** Survey instruments and letters • **Internet:** Internet survey, emails, and required credentials • **Telephone:** Screenshots of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system	**Deadline Mail:** October 10, 2025 **Deadline Internet:** October 31, 2025 **Deadline Telephone:** November 14, 2025

2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline (cont'd)

Task	Date
Report #1: Vendors submit Quality Assurance Plan	**Deadline:** October 17, 2025
Report #2: Vendors submit preliminary QHP client list and oversampling requests	**Deadline:** January 7, 2026
• QHP issuers attest to QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey eligibility status, authorize a vendor, and confirm sample frame validation • Vendors obtain authorization from QHP issuer clients to conduct surveys on their behalf	**Deadline:** January 30, 2026

QHP issuer contracts with a HEDIS® Compliance Organization (NCQA-licensed) for validation of the QHP Enrollee Survey sample frame and the QRS clinical measure data by October 1, 2025.

2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline (cont'd)

Task	Date
• Vendors receive validated sample frames from QHP issuer clients and obtain confirmation that a HEDIS® Compliance Auditor validated the sample frame • Vendors notify CMS of QHP issuer clients that have not provided validated sample frame by the deadline	**Deadline:** January 30, 2026
• QHP issuer completes NCQA's Healthcare Organization Questionnaire (HOQ) for the HEDIS® Compliance Auditor to prepare for QRS clinical measure data submission	**Deadline:** February 2026
• QHP issuers and HEDIS® Compliance Auditor complete the HEDIS® Compliance Audit™	January–June 2026

2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline (cont'd)

Task	Date
Vendors administer QHP Enrollee Survey per sampling and fielding protocols	February–May 2026
Report #3: Vendors submit final QHP issuer client list	**Deadline:** February 6, 2026
Vendors participate in QHP Enrollee Survey Data Submission Training	February 26, 2026
Report #4: Vendors submit Interim Progress Report	**Deadline:** April 3, 2026

2026 QHP Enrollee Survey Timeline (cont'd)

Task	Date
Test data submission	April 8–10, 2026
Data submission *Files due by 11:59 p.m. ET on May 15, 2026*	May 8–15, 2026
Data resubmission (if requested) *Must submit within three business days of date requested*	**Deadline:** May 18–20, 2026
Report #5: Vendors submit Final Report	**Deadline:** May 22, 2026