

FAQ: CMS COVID-19 Guidance for Qualified Health Plan (QHP) Enrollee Experience Survey Vendors

What guidance has CMS released regarding the 2020 Qualified Health Plan Enrollee Experience Survey?

As stated in the COVID-19 Marketplace Quality Initiatives memo posted on April 18, 2020 and available on CMS' [Health Insurance Marketplace Quality Initiatives \(MQI\) site](#), CMS is exercising enforcement discretion to adopt a temporary policy of relaxed enforcement and is directing all eligible QHP issuers to discontinue the collection of clinical quality measure data and survey measure data that would normally be reported between May and June 2020. This enforcement discretion policy includes discontinuation of reporting for the QRS and QHP Enrollee Survey for display as quality ratings on Exchange websites beginning during the 2021 Open Enrollment period for the individual market.

Why was this decision made?

Given the challenges healthcare providers are facing responding to the COVID-19 virus, CMS is not continuing with this year's data collection and reporting efforts as these activities may divert physician offices from caring for patients, as well as jeopardize the health and safety of QHP issuer staff and survey vendor staff.

Can vendors continue fielding the 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey?

Vendors may continue fielding the 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey if their clients elect to proceed with data collection for quality improvement (QI) purposes. Vendors should work with their clients to determine if they would like to continue collecting survey response data.

Can survey vendors modify or suspend the QHP Enrollee Survey fielding protocols?

Survey vendors should discuss next steps regarding survey fielding with their QHP issuer clients. While CMS is not requiring QHP survey vendors to submit QHP survey data for Plan Year 2021, survey vendors and issuers may decide to continue fielding the survey, using the approved survey templates and materials, and analyze survey data for internal quality improvement activities. However, CMS will not review or provide oversight for any proposed fielding modifications because of the CMS decision to suspend 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey data collection activities as outlined in the COVID-19 Marketplace Quality Initiatives memo.

What QHP Enrollee Survey data can survey vendors provide to their clients?

CMS permits survey vendors to provide de-identified person-level data sets (survey responses) to QHP issuers for the core survey items included in the QHP Enrollee Survey (see 2019 QHP Enrollee Survey Quality Improvement Report Methodology Guide). CMS prohibits attempts to identify individuals in the person-level file and requires that survey vendors redact certain survey items from the data set to protect personally identifiable information. CMS will not waive requirements to exclude these questions from the person-level data sets provided to QHP issuers (see Exhibit 59 of the [2020 QHP Enrollee Survey Technical Specifications](#) for additional information). Survey vendors may prepare Quality Improvement (QI) Reports for their clients, but must caveat that the results are not official CMS results.

Survey vendors are permitted to provide reporting unit-level data sets for survey questions 3 through 68 and the breakdown of final disposition codes to their QHP issuer clients. In 2019, the QI Report Methodology Team determined that the QHP Enrollee Survey data is not subject to CMS' cell suppression policy; therefore, survey vendors may include cell values of less than 11 in the reporting unit-level data sets.

How can vendors calculate QHP Enrollee Survey scores?

Survey vendors may prepare Quality Improvement (QI) Reports for their clients, but must provide a disclaimer on each report explaining that these results are not CMS official scores. To assist with preparing QI Reports, the Project Team has included the 2019 QHP Enrollee Survey Quality Improvement Report Methodology Guide as a resource for survey vendors. As noted in the guide, CMS calculates composite scores, individual item scores, reliability, and response rates for each reporting unit using the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Systems (CAHPS®) macro program for all Scoring questions. For more information on the CAHPS macro program please see:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/cahps/news-and-events/events/ahrq-conference-2015/walsh-slides.html>

What QHP Enrollee Survey response data should survey vendors submit to the Project Team?

There will be no final data submission period for the 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey. This activity was previously scheduled to occur from May 15-22, 2020. Survey vendors are not required to submit any survey response data to the Project Team for the 2021 Plan Year. CMS is considering voluntary data submissions for purposes of internal data analysis and to enhance future quality reporting efforts.

Will survey vendors be required to participate in additional QHP Enrollee Survey oversight activities?

CMS is suspending 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey activities, including all remaining oversight activities. CMS welcomes feedback on the 2020 QHP Enrollee Survey fielding; survey vendors wishing to provide feedback may do so by emailing QHPSurveyVendor@bah.com.

Who should QHP issuers contact with questions?

Please direct clients with questions related to this new guidance to the Marketplace Service Desk (CMS_FEPS@cms.hhs.gov or 1-855-267-1515). QHP issuers should include “Marketplace Quality Initiatives (MQI) – QRS/QHP Enrollee Survey” in the subject line of all emails.