

# Minimum Business Requirements To Administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey

A survey vendor and/or its subcontractor(s) and any other organizations that are responsible for performing major CAHPS Hospice Survey administration functions (e.g., mail/web/telephone operations, XML file preparation) must meet **ALL** of the Survey Vendor Minimum Business Requirements that pertain to their role at the time the CAHPS<sup>®1</sup> Hospice Survey Participation Form is received. The minimum business requirements for an organization to become approved to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey are as follows:

## Management Relationships:

| Criteria  | Survey Vendor  |
|---|--|
| <b>Current/Future Relationships with Hospices</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The following types of organizations are <b>not</b> eligible to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey (as an approved CAHPS Hospice Survey vendor): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organizations or divisions within organizations that own or operate a hospice or provide hospice services, even if the division is run as a separate entity to the hospice;</li> <li>• organizations that provide telehealth, monitoring of hospice patients, or teleprompting services for the hospice; and</li> <li>• organizations that provide staffing to hospices for providing care to hospice patients, whether personal care aides or skilled services staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Relevant Survey Experience:

Demonstrated **recent** (e.g., 2022-2025) continuous experience in fielding patient-specific surveys in the requested mode(s) (i.e., Mail, Web Mail [web followed by mail], Telephone, Mixed Mode [mail followed by telephone]).

| Criteria   | Survey Vendor   |
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| <b>Number of Years in Business</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Minimum four years</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Number of Years Conducting Patient-Specific Surveys</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Minimum of three consecutive years Mail, and/or Telephone, and/or Mixed Mode (mail followed by telephone) patient-specific survey experience within the most recent three-year time period</li> <li>➤ Minimum of two consecutive years Web Mail mode patient-specific survey experience within the most recent two-year time period</li> <li>➤ Prior experience in conducting surveys in English (required) and Spanish (preferred)</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> CAHPS<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a U.S. Government agency.

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|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Sampling Experience</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Two years prior experience selecting a random sample based on specific eligibility criteria within the most recent two-year time period</li> <li>➤ Work with contracted client(s) to obtain patient data for sampling via Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act- (HIPAA) compliant electronic data transfer processes</li> <li>➤ Adequately document sampling process</li> <li>➤ Survey vendors are responsible for conducting the sampling process and must not subcontract this activity</li> </ul> |

### Survey Capability and Capacity:

Capability and capacity to handle a required volume of mail questionnaires, conduct standardized telephone interviewing, and/or conduct web survey administration in specified time frame.

| Criteria         | Survey Vendor  |
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| <b>Personnel</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Designated CAHPS Hospice Survey personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Director with minimum two years prior experience conducting patient-specific mail and/or phone surveys in the requested mode(s)</li> <li>• Subject Matter Expert (SME) in web survey administration (subcontractor designee, if applicable) with a minimum of two years prior experience for web surveys</li> <li>• Staff with minimum one year prior experience in sample frame development and sample selection</li> <li>• Programmer (subcontractor designee, if applicable) with minimum one year prior experience receiving large, encrypted data files in different formats/software packages electronically from an external organization; processing survey data needed for survey administration and survey response data; preparing data files for electronic submission; and submitting data files to an external organization</li> <li>• Web Programmer (subcontractor designee, if applicable) with a minimum of one year prior experience programming, testing, and collecting data via web survey instruments</li> <li>• Call Center/Mail Center Supervisor (subcontractor designee, if applicable) with minimum one year prior experience in role</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Have appropriate organizational back-up staff for coverage of key staff</li> <li>➤ Volunteers are not permitted to be involved in any aspect of the CAHPS Hospice Survey administration process</li> </ul> |

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|--|---|
| <b>Physical Plant and System Resources</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Physical plant resources available to handle the volume of surveys being administered, including computer and technical equipment:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A secure commercial work environment</li> <li>• Home-based or virtual interviewers cannot be used to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey, nor may they conduct any survey administration processes <u>unless</u> an Exception Request has been submitted and approved by CMS</li> <li>• Physical facilities and electronic equipment and software to collect, process and report data securely</li> <li>• If offering telephone surveys, must have the equipment, software and facilities to conduct computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and to monitor interviewers</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Electronic or alternative survey management system to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• track fielded surveys throughout the protocol, avoiding respondent burden and losing respondents</li> <li>• assign random, unique, de-identified identification number (Tracking ID) to track each sampled decedent/primary informal caregiver (i.e., family member or friend of the hospice patient)</li> <li>• remove records with completed surveys from further outreach in a timely manner across all modes of administration</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Computer software for implementing web survey instruments that are accessible in mobile and computer versions that are 508 compliant, present similarly on different browser applications, browser sizes and platforms (mobile, tablet, computer)</li> <li>➤ Organizations that are approved to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey <u>must</u> conduct all of their business operations within the United States. This requirement applies to all staff and subcontractors, or other organizations involved in survey administration.</li> <li>➤ All System Resources are subject to oversight activities, including site visits to physical locations</li> </ul> |
| <b>Sample Frame Creation</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A minimum of two years prior experience selecting a random sample based on specific eligibility criteria in the most recent two-year time period</li> <li>➤ Generate the sample frame data file that contains all individuals who meet the eligible population criteria</li> <li>➤ Draw random sample of individuals for the survey who meet the eligible population criteria</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Mail Administration</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mail survey administration activities are not to be conducted from a residence, nor from a virtual office <u>unless</u> an Exception Request has been submitted and approved by CMS</li> <li>➤ Obtain and update addresses of sampled caregivers of hospice decedents               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use commercial software/resources to ensure that mailing addresses are accurate</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Produce and print professional quality survey instruments and materials according to guidelines; a sample of all mailing materials must be submitted for review</li> <li>➤ Merge and print sample name and address on personalized mail prenotification letters and survey cover letters, and print unique Tracking ID on the survey questionnaire</li> <li>➤ Mail out survey materials</li> <li>➤ Receive and process (key-enter or scan) completed questionnaires</li> <li>➤ Track and identify non-respondents for follow-up mailing</li> <li>➤ Assign final survey status codes to describe the final result of work on each sampled record</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Web Mail Administration (Web with Mail Follow-up)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Web Mail survey administration is not to be conducted from a residence, nor from a virtual office <u>unless</u> an Exception Request has been submitted and approved by CMS</li> <li>➤ Obtain and validate caregiver email addresses provided by client hospice(s)</li> <li>➤ Collect web survey data</li> <li>➤ Identify non-respondents for follow-up mail administration</li> <li>➤ Submit a sample of survey materials in all utilized languages for review (as applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation and reminder emails</li> <li>• Web survey screenshots that display what the respondent will see and will present similarly on different browser applications, browser sizes and platforms (mobile, tablet, computer) and a web survey testing link</li> <li>• Hard copy letter(s) and questionnaire</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Capacity to disseminate survey invitation emails that include an embedded hyperlink that the caregiver can click on to directly connect to the web survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an “Unsubscribe” or “Opt Out” statement is added to email invitations, 1) the link must direct sampled caregivers to a new web page, 2) indicate that opting out or unsubscribing results in removal from further hospice email invitations only, and 3) does not result in removal from hospice mail follow-up of survey administration</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Adhere to all Mail Only survey administration requirements (described above)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Telephone Administration</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Telephone interviews are not to be conducted from a residence, nor from a virtual office <u>unless</u> an Exception Request has been submitted and approved by CMS</li> <li>➤ Obtain and update mailing addresses</li> <li>➤ Produce and print prenotification letters; a sample of all mailing materials in all utilized languages must be submitted for review</li> <li>➤ Mail out prenotification letters</li> <li>➤ Obtain, verify, and update telephone numbers</li> </ul>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop CATI system</li> <li>➤ Collect telephone interview data for the survey using CATI system; a sample of the telephone script and interviewer screenshots in all utilized languages must be submitted for review</li> <li>➤ Identify non-respondents for follow-up telephone calls</li> <li>➤ Schedule and conduct callbacks to non-respondents at varying times of the day and different days of the week</li> <li>➤ Assign final survey status codes to reflect the final result of attempts to obtain a completed interview with each sampled record</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Mixed Mode Administration (Mail with Telephone Follow-up)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mail survey administration and telephone interviews are not to be conducted from a residence, nor from a virtual office <u>unless</u> an Exception Request has been submitted and approved by CMS</li> <li>➤ Adhere to all Mail Only and Telephone Only survey administration requirements (described above)</li> <li>➤ Track cases from mail survey through telephone follow-up activities</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Data Submission</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Two years prior experience transmitting data via secure methods (HIPAA-compliant)</li> <li>➤ Survey vendors are responsible for conducting data submission and must not subcontract this process</li> <li>➤ Survey vendors must have the capacity to do the following actions to submit quarterly data files: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register as a user of the CAHPS Hospice Survey Data Warehouse</li> <li>• Confirm contracted hospices have authorized survey vendor to submit data on behalf of the hospice</li> <li>• Import data from web survey system into a data file, if applicable</li> <li>• Import scanned or key-entered data from completed mail surveys into a data file, if applicable</li> <li>• Import (as necessary) data from CATI system into a data file, if applicable</li> <li>• Develop data files and edit and clean data according to standard protocols</li> <li>• Follow all data cleaning and data submission rules, including verifying that data files are de-identified and contain no duplicate cases</li> <li>• Export data from the electronic data collection system to the required format for data submission, confirm that the data are exported correctly and that the data submission files are formatted correctly and contain the correct data headers and data records</li> <li>• Encrypt and submit data electronically in the specified format to the CAHPS Hospice Survey Data Warehouse</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with CMS' contractor to resolve data problems and data submission issues</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Data Security</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Administer web surveys with a secure hyperlink that is unique to each sampled caregiver, the data transmitted over a secure connection over HTTPS using transport layer security (TLS), and respondent information must be securely stored</li> <li>➤ Survey vendors must have the capacity to do the following actions to secure electronic data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a firewall and/or other mechanisms for preventing unauthorized access to electronic files</li> <li>• Implement access levels and security passwords so that only authorized users have access to sensitive data</li> <li>• Implement daily data back-up procedures that adequately safeguard system data</li> <li>• Test back-up files on a quarterly basis, at a minimum, to make sure the files are easily retrievable and working</li> <li>• Perform frequent saves to media to minimize data losses in the event of power interruption</li> <li>• Develop procedures for identifying and handling breaches of confidential data</li> <li>• Develop a disaster recovery plan for conducting ongoing business operations in the event of a disaster</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Data Retention and Storage</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Survey vendors must have the capacity to do the following actions to securely store all data related to survey administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store CAHPS Hospice Survey-related data files, including decedents/caregivers lists and de-identified electronic data files (e.g., sample frame, survey responses, XML files, etc.), for all applicable survey modes for a minimum of three years. Archived electronic data files must be easily retrievable.</li> <li>• Store de-identified returned mail questionnaires in a secure and environmentally safe location (e.g., locked file cabinet, locked closet or room), if applicable. Paper copies or optically scanned images of the questionnaires must be retained for a minimum of three years and be easily retrievable.</li> <li>• Destroy CAHPS Hospice Survey related data files, including paper copies or scanned images of the questionnaires and electronic data files in a secure and environmentally safe location. Obtain a certificate of the destruction of data.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <b>Technical Assistance/<br/>Customer Support</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Two years prior experience providing telephone customer support</li> <li>➤ Accommodate inquiries that are submitted by phone and/or email, if applicable</li> <li>➤ Provide toll-free customer support line: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering customer support in all languages that the survey vendor administers the survey in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of live operator during regular business hours</li> <li>• Returning calls within 24-48 hours</li> </ul> <p>➤ Conduct accurate monitoring of the customer support line and customer support email inbox, if applicable, in all languages in which the survey is administered to ensure accurate responses are provided</p>  |
| <b>Organizational Confidentiality Requirements</b> | <p>➤ Survey vendors must have the capacity to do all of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop confidentiality agreements which include language related to HIPAA regulations and the protection of personal identifying information (PII) and obtain signatures from all personnel with access to survey information, including staff and all subcontractors or other organizations involved in survey administration and data collection. Confidentiality agreements must be reviewed and re-signed periodically, at the discretion of the survey vendor, but not to exceed more than a three-year period.</li> <li>• Execute Business Associate Agreement(s) (BAA) in accordance with HIPAA regulations</li> <li>• Confirm that staff and subcontractors or other organizations involved in survey administration are compliant with HIPAA regulations in regard to decedent/caregiver protected health information (PHI) and PII</li> <li>• Establish protocols for secure file transmission. Emailing of PHI or PII via unsecure email is prohibited.</li> </ul> |

### Participation in Quality Control Activities and Documentation Requirements:

Personnel training and quality control mechanisms employed to collect valid, reliable survey data

| Criteria                                       | Survey Vendor   |
|--|---|
| <b>Demonstrated Quality Control Procedures</b> | <p>➤ Incorporate well-documented quality control procedures (as applicable) for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of in-house staff and subcontractors or other organizations involved in survey operations</li> <li>• Printing, mailing and recording receipt of survey questionnaires, if applicable</li> <li>• Telephone administration and monitoring of survey (electronic telephone interviewing system) in all languages in which the survey is administered, if applicable</li> <li>• Oversee transition between initial mode and follow-up mode (e.g., Mail Phone, Web Mail)</li> <li>• Coding and verifying of survey data and survey-related materials</li> </ul> |

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|-----------------------------------|---|
|                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the performance of all subcontractor(s)/ partner(s) or other organization(s) performing major CAHPS Hospice Survey administration functions</li> <li>• Printing, mailing, and recording receipt of survey information, if applicable</li> <li>• Phone administration of survey, if applicable</li> <li>• Web administration of survey, if applicable</li> <li>• Scanning or keying-in survey data</li> <li>• Preparation of final person-level data files for submission</li> <li>• Submitting Discrepancy Reports immediately upon discovering a discrepancy in following CAHPS Hospice Survey protocols</li> <li>• All other functions and processes that affect the administration of the CAHPS Hospice Survey</li> </ul> <p>➤ Participate in any conference calls and site visits as part of overall quality monitoring activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide documentation as requested for site visits and conference calls, including but not limited to: staff training records, telephone interviewer monitoring records and file construction documentation</li> </ul> |
| <b>Documentation Requirements</b> | <p>➤ Keep electronic or hard copy files of staff training and training dates</p> <p>➤ Maintain electronic documentation of telephone monitoring, if applicable</p> <p>➤ Maintain documentation of mail production quality checks</p> <p>➤ Maintain documentation of email and web administration quality checks</p> <p>➤ Maintain documentation of all survey administration activities and related quality checks for review during site visits</p> <p>➤ Develop a Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) for survey administration in accordance with CAHPS Hospice Survey <i>Quality Assurance Guidelines</i> and update the QAP at the time of process and/or key personnel changes as part of retaining participation status</p>   |

### Adhere to all Protocols, Specifications and Agree to Participate in Training Sessions:

| Criteria               | Survey Vendor   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Survey Training</b> | <p>➤ Attend all CAHPS Hospice Survey Training sessions [at a minimum, survey vendor's Project Manager, SME in web survey administration (if applicable), Mail Survey Supervisor, and Telephone Survey Supervisor (if applicable) and subcontractors or other organizations involved in survey administration assigned key roles must attend training]</p> |



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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Successfully complete the post-training quiz measuring comprehension of CAHPS Hospice Survey protocols</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Administer the Survey according to all Survey Specifications</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review and follow all procedures described in the CAHPS Hospice Survey <i>Quality Assurance Guidelines</i> that are applicable to the selected survey data collection mode(s)</li> <li>➤ Fully comply with the CAHPS Hospice Survey oversight activities</li> <li>➤ Approved survey vendors are expected to maintain active contract(s) for CAHPS Hospice Survey administration with client hospice(s). An “active contract” is one in which the CAHPS Hospice Survey vendor is authorized by hospice client(s) to collect and submit CAHPS Hospice Survey data to the CAHPS Hospice Survey Data Warehouse. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a CAHPS Hospice Survey vendor does not have any contracted hospice clients within two years (a consecutive 24 months) of the date they received approval to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey, then that survey vendor’s “Approved” status for CAHPS Hospice Survey administration will be withdrawn</li> <li>• If approval status is withdrawn, the organization must once again follow the steps to apply for reconsideration for approval to administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If a survey vendor chooses to not re-apply at this time, then a 24-month wait period will be required before the organization is eligible to apply again</li> <li>○ If a CAHPS Hospice Survey vendor is approved for a second term and does not have any contracted hospice clients by the end of the second 24-month approved period, a 24-month wait period will be required before the organization is eligible to apply again</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Past Performance</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In determining approval, CMS will take into consideration any prior experience the applicant organization may have administering CMS or other patient experience surveys, including as a subcontractor.</li> <li>➤ The CAHPS Hospice Survey Project Team will review performance on CMS surveys or other patient experience surveys, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurrence of substantive errors within or across projects</li> <li>• Compliance with required protocols</li> <li>• Receipt of a corrective action memo from CMS</li> <li>• CMS requests for quality improvement plans</li> <li>• Timeliness and completion of required documentation (e.g., QAP, survey materials, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |