

# Patient Experience Measures from the CAHPS® Dental Plan Survey

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This document discusses the types of patient experience measures associated with the CAHPS Dental Plan Survey, lists the survey's composite and rating measures, and offers basic guidance on reporting the survey results to consumers and other audiences.

## Types of Measures

Like all CAHPS surveys, the CAHPS Dental Plan Survey generates three types of measures for reporting purposes:

- **Composite measures** (also known as reporting composites) combine results for closely related items that have been grouped together. Composite measures are strongly recommended for both public and private reporting because they allow for reports that are comprehensive, yet of reasonable length. Psychometric analyses also indicate that composite measures are reliable and valid measures of patients' experiences.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> To learn about the calculation of scores for composite measures, read about [analyzing CAHPS survey data](#).
- **Rating measures** are based on items that use a scale of 0 to 10 to measure respondents' assessments of their provider. This measure is sometimes referred to as the "global rating" or "overall rating."
- **Single-item measures** are individual survey questions that did not fit into the composite measures. These measures are especially useful in reports for providers and other internal audiences that use the data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses. When reporting single-item measures, it is important to indicate that the measure reflects performance on just one survey question in contrast to the multiple questions represented by composite measures.

## List of Measures in the Dental Plan Survey

The CAHPS Dental Plan Survey produces three composite measures and four rating measures:

- Care from dentists and staff (composite of 6 items)
- Access to dental care (composite of 5 items)
- Dental plan costs and services (composite of 6 items)

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<sup>1</sup> McGee J, Kanouse DE, Sofaer S, Hargraves JL, Hoy E, Kleimann S. Making survey results easy to report to consumers: How reporting needs guided survey design in CAHPS®. *Med Care*. 1999 Mar;37(3 Suppl):MS32-40.

<sup>2</sup> Solomon LS, Hays RD, Zaslavsky AM, Ding L, Cleary PD. Psychometric properties of a group-level Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study (CAHPS) instrument. *Med Care*. 2005 Jan;43(1):53-60.

<sup>3</sup> Hays RD, Chong K, Brown J, Spritzer KL, Horne K. Patient reports and ratings of individual physicians: an evaluation of the DoctorGuide and Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study provider-level surveys. *Am J Med Qual*. 2003 Sep-Oct;18(5):190-6.

- Patients' ratings (4 individual items)
  - Regular dentist
  - All dental care
  - Ease of finding a dentist
  - Dental plan

Please note that the CAHPS Consortium has not developed and tested labels for the composite measures.

The appendix shows which survey questions are included in each measure.

## Reporting Dental Plan Survey Measures

Users of the CAHPS Dental Plan Survey may report the results of the survey publicly to inform health care consumers and/or privately to inform dental plans and dentists and support their efforts to improve patients' experiences with care. While the basic content included in these reports may be the same, the specific content should differ because the purposes differ.

In reports intended for consumers, the goal is to provide information that people can use to assess and compare the performance of dental plans and dentists and identify the ones that best meet their needs. To that end, the presentation of measures and scores must be concise and easily digestible. The use of composite measures rather than individual items is one way to avoid "information overload" among consumers.

To learn about reporting CAHPS survey results to consumers, visit –

- [Reporting Results to Consumers](#) (AHRQ CAHPS Web site)
- [TalkingQuality](#) (AHRQ Web site)

A report intended for dental plans, dentists, and other internal audiences must also be clear and concise, but can and should contain more information in order to support use of the results to identify relative strengths and weaknesses. These reports need to provide trend data (when available) and different kinds of comparators, such as local or State averages and percentiles. They can also provide a greater level of detail, such as results at the item level, results for supplemental items, and the full range of survey responses (i.e., the percent that gave each possible response). With this information, plans and providers are equipped to analyze their data and take steps towards improving their patients' experiences.

Learn more about using CAHPS survey results to [improve patient experience](#).

Related resource: [The CAHPS Ambulatory Care Improvement Guide](#)

## Appendix: Survey Items Organized by Measure

Care from Dentists and Staff		
Q6	How often did your regular dentist explain things in a way that was easy to understand?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never</li> <li>• Sometimes</li> <li>• Usually</li> <li>• Always</li> </ul>
Q7	How often did your regular dentist listen carefully to you?	
Q8	How often did your regular dentist treat you with courtesy and respect?	
Q9	How often did your regular dentist spend enough time with you?	
Q11	How often did the dentists or dental staff do everything they could to help you feel as comfortable as possible during your dental work?	
Q12	How often did the dentists or dental staff explain what they were doing while treating you?	

Access to Dental Care		
Q13	How often were your dental appointments as soon as you wanted?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never</li> <li>• Sometimes</li> <li>• Usually</li> <li>• Always</li> </ul>
Q15 <sup>4</sup>	If you tried to get an appointment for yourself with a dentist who specializes in a particular type of dental care (such as root canals or gum disease) in the last 12 months, how often did you get an appointment as soon as you wanted?	
Q16	How often did you have to spend more than 15 minutes in the waiting room before you saw someone for your appointment?	
Q17 <sup>5</sup>	If you had to spend more than 15 minutes in the waiting room before you saw someone for your appointment, how often did someone tell you why there was a delay or how long the delay would be?	
Q14 <sup>6</sup>	If you needed to see a dentist right away because of a dental emergency in the last 12 months, did you get to see a dentist as soon as you wanted?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitely Yes</li> <li>• Somewhat Yes</li> <li>• Somewhat No</li> <li>• Definitely No</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Response option for question 15 only: I did not try to get an appointment with a specialist dentist for myself in the last 12 months.

<sup>5</sup> Response option for question 17 only: I never had to spend more than 15 minutes in the waiting room before seeing someone for an appointment.

<sup>6</sup> Response option for question 14 only: I did not have a dental emergency in the last 12 months.

### Dental Plan Costs and Services

Q19	How often did your dental plan cover all of the services you thought were covered?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never</li> <li>• Sometimes</li> <li>• Usually</li> <li>• Always</li> </ul>
Q22	How often did the 800 number, written materials, or website provide the information you wanted?	
Q27	How often did your dental plan's customer service give you the information or help you needed?	
Q28	How often did your dental plan's customer service staff treat you with courtesy and respect?	
Q20	Did your dental plan cover what you and your family needed to get done?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitely Yes</li> <li>• Somewhat Yes</li> <li>• Somewhat No</li> <li>• Definitely No</li> </ul>
Q24	Did this information (from your dental plan) help you find a dentist you were happy with?	

### Patients' Ratings

Q10	Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst regular dentist possible and 10 is the best regular dentist possible, what number would you use to rate your regular dentist?	<b>Response Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-10</li> </ul>
Q18	Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst dental care possible and 10 is the best dental care possible, what number would you use to rate all of the dental care you personally received in the last 12 months?	
Q25	Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely difficult and 10 is extremely easy, what number would you use to rate how easy it was for you to find a dentist?	
Q29	Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst dental plan possible and 10 is the best dental plan possible, what number would you use to rate your dental plan?	