

ICH CAHPS Survey Fact Sheet for ESRD Networks

Overview of The In-Center Hemodialysis CAHPS Survey

The In-Center Hemodialysis Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (ICH CAHPS) Survey is designed to measure the experiences of people receiving in-center hemodialysis care from Medicare-certified dialysis facilities (also referred to as ICH facilities or dialysis centers). Dialysis facilities should note that their patients will most likely know this as the *Medicare In-Center Hemodialysis Survey*.

One of the goals of the CMS National Quality Strategy is to foster engagement and to bring the voices of patients to the forefront. As part of fostering engagement, we hear the voice of patients receiving dialysis care through the ICH CAHPS survey. This survey also supports the Quality Incentive Program (QIP), which was authorized under section 153(c) of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, to promote high-quality services in renal dialysis facilities.

The national implementation of the ICH CAHPS Survey began in 2014. The survey is conducted twice a year, in the spring and fall. Dialysis facilities that serve 30 or more survey-eligible patients in the preceding calendar year are required to participate in the ICH CAHPS Spring and Fall Surveys of the current year. Over 7,200 dialysis facilities participate and approximately 100,000 patients respond to the survey each survey period.

Survey results are reported semiannually (April and October) on Care Compare on Medicare.gov (<https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/>). The survey results that are publicly reported are based on combined data from the two most recent survey periods. To be eligible for public reporting, participating dialysis facilities must have at least 30 completed surveys combined from the two survey periods included in the public reporting period. For dialysis facilities that do not have survey results publicly reported, a footnote will appear on the compare tool on Medicare.gov to indicate why results are not reported, such as too few completed surveys in the two reported periods.

Why is The ICH CAHPS Survey Important and How Can Dialysis Facilities Help?

Participation in the ICH CAHPS Survey is critical! Publicly reported data from the ICH CAHPS Survey are used by multiple sectors:

- Consumers to inform decisions about choosing an ICH facility,
- ICH facilities for quality improvement initiatives, and
- CMS to monitor quality of dialysis care.

Because this is a vulnerable population, CMS wants to continue to receive feedback from patients about the dialysis care that they receive, and how their experiences may change over time. Although dialysis facilities cannot assist patients in completing the survey, they can help promote patient engagement. We share some ideas here but if you have other ideas, we welcome suggestions!

- **Show Patients the ICH CAHPS Survey Envelope:** Show your patients the ICH CAHPS Survey envelope so they can easily recognize it should they receive one in the mail. Your facility's authorized survey vendor can provide the specific envelope template for this purpose.

- **Let Patients Know What Phone Number to Expect a Call From:** Work with your survey vendor so that you can advertise the telephone number that patients will receive a call from. If patients have prior knowledge of the phone number that will be calling them to conduct the phone survey, they may be more inclined to answer and ultimately complete the survey.
- **Hang or Share the ICH CAHPS Flyer or Poster:** Consider using a poster/flyer or other awareness materials within your facilities, providing a heads-up to patients that their participation in the ICH CAHPS Survey is important. This may be especially helpful right before and during each data collection period (schedule found here: <https://ichcahps.org>). You may use the CMS-approved version (found at: <https://ichcahps.org/Survey-and-Protocols>) or ask for approval to use your own (send request to: ichcahps@rti.org).
- **Have the Waiting Room FAQs Available:** Consider printing and displaying the official ICH CAHPS “Waiting Room FAQs” document in a prominent area of your facility (i.e., perhaps hanging on a wall/door or laminated and sitting on a table). This document was shared with participating facilities’ ICH CAHPS Survey Administrators via email in May of 2023, but it can also be found here: <https://ichcahps.org/Survey-and-Protocols>.
- **Remind Patients of the Survey Fundamentals:** Explain the details of the ICH CAHPS Survey with your patients, including the purpose, the importance of patient participation, the upcoming data collection schedule (when to look for mail surveys or when they might receive phone calls), how results are published on Medicare.gov’s Care Compare website, and any facility plans to improve patient care based on survey results.

Roles and Responsibilities of ICH CAHPS Participating Dialysis Facilities

Dialysis facilities must determine whether they are required to participate in the ICH CAHPS Survey, contract with a CMS-approved survey vendor, register their CCN(s) on the ICH CAHPS website, and authorize their contracted vendor to collect data on their behalf. The graphic below highlights the critical steps in the process for dialysis facilities. For a detailed participation overview, dialysis facilities should refer to this document: <https://ichcahps.org/Portals/0/Docs/ICHCAHPSParticipationOverview.pdf>

Roles and Responsibilities of ICH CAHPS Participating Facilities

ICH CAHPS Facility Roles and Responsibilities					
Register for login credentials on ICH CAHPS Website	Register your CCN	Contract with a-CMS approved Survey Vendor	Authorize your contracted Survey Vendor	Review the survey data submission reports	Monitor the ICH CAHPS website for news and updates

More Information About The ICH CAHPS Survey

Survey Content

Although CMS is presently analyzing whether the survey can be shortened in an effort to address patient burden, the ICH CAHPS Survey currently contains 62 survey questions that ask about kidney doctors, dialysis facility staff, dialysis facility, and self-reported health status and basic demographic questions.

Sampling

For each survey period, a sample of eligible patients is selected using patient-level data from CMS's End Stage Renal Disease Quality Reporting System (EQRS) and provided to each participating facility's authorized survey vendor. Due to the nature of the survey population, many patients are asked to participate in the survey twice a year, so that Medicare can understand how patient experience may change over time.

Survey Administration

There are currently three approved data collection modes for the ICH CAHPS Survey: mail-only, telephone-only, and mixed mode (mail with telephone follow-up). The data collection for the Spring Survey is conducted from April through July of each year and November through January for the Fall Survey.

ICH CAHPS Facility Survey Administrators

The ICH CAHPS Coordination Team occasionally sends email messages containing important information regarding the ICH CAHPS Survey to dialysis facilities registered on the ICH CAHPS website. The emails are sent to the person within the facility who has been designated as the facility's ICH CAHPS Survey Administrator (SA). Facilities are encouraged to review the contact information listed on the ICH CAHPS website for their designated SA: <https://ichcahps.org/General-Information/Announcements/entryid/322>

ICH CAHPS Coordination Team Semi-Annual Review (CTSAR)

The ICH CAHPS Semi-Annual Review (CTSAR) is a newsletter that highlights important information for vendors and facilities and is posted on the website every January and July. Facilities are encouraged to monitor the ICH CAHPS website for more information on the items mentioned in the newsletters, and for additional updates and announcements related to the survey.

For more information about the In-Center Hemodialysis CAHPS Survey, please visit the ICH CAHPS website at <https://ichcahps.org/Home.aspx>. For questions, the ICH CAHPS Coordination Team can be contacted via email at ichcahps@rti.org or by phone at 1-866-245-8083.