

**MINIMUM SURVEY VENDOR BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE HOME HEALTH CARE CAHPS (HHCAHPS) SURVEY**

The HHCAHPS minimum business requirements (MBRs) described within this document are applicable to survey organizations at the time of application. The vendor must continue to meet these MBRs after an initial application is submitted up to and any point after approval is granted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Criteria	Requirement
Relevant Organizational Experience	
Number of Years in Business at Time of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 3 years.
Number of Years Conducting Surveys as an Organization at Time of Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years conducting surveys of individuals. (Requirement applies to vendors and subcontractors.) If staff within the vendor organization have relevant experience obtained while in the employment of a different organization, that experience may not be counted toward this 2-year minimum. • Minimum of 2 years conducting surveys using mode of administration the vendor is applying for. (Requirement applies to vendors and subcontractors.) • For purposes of HHCAHPS, a “survey of individuals” is defined as the collection of data from individuals selected by statistical sampling methods and the data collected are used for statistical purposes. Polling questions, focus groups, cognitive interviews, surveys of fewer than 600 individuals, surveys that did not involve statistical sampling methods, Internet or web-based surveys, and interactive voice recognition surveys will not satisfy the “survey of individuals” requirement. • Establishment and institution surveys do not meet this requirement. • CMS reserves the right to request a past performance evaluation from the vendor or CAHPS contractor.
HHCAHPS-Specific Organizational Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any organization that owns, operates, or provides staffing for a home health agency (HHA) will <u>not</u> be permitted to administer its own HHCAHPS Survey or administer the survey on behalf of any other HHAs. The following types of organizations are not eligible to administer the HHCAHPS Survey (as an approved HHCAHPS survey vendor): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ organizations or divisions within organizations that own or operate an HHA or provide home health services, even if the division is run as a separate entity to the HHA; ○ organizations that provide telehealth, monitoring of home health patients, or teleprompting services for HHAs; and ○ organizations that provide staffing to HHAs for providing care to home health patients, whether personal care aides or skilled services staff.

Criteria	Requirement
Requirements to Reapply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vendors that do not have any HHA clients after 2 years from the date of their interim approval will have their approval rescinded. If the vendor wants to maintain their approved vendor status, they must reapply.
Work With RTI International	
Organization Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTI International serves as the HHCAHPS Survey Coordination Team. In this role, RTI provides oversight to CMS-approved HHCAHPS Survey vendors. To avoid a potential conflict of interest, vendors must not have any existing or future work with RTI while actively implementing and submitting data for the HHCAHPS Survey. Vendors must disclose any existing or future contracts with RTI that fall under the specifications in the bullet above. CMS reserves the right to request additional information or documentation of the vendor's work with RTI.
Survey Capability and Capacity	
Personnel	<p>Vendors must currently have adequate staffing, including at least two individuals who will serve in the designated HHCAHPS roles listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Manager with relevant survey and management experience. This person must be different from the Sampling Manager. Sampling Manager with experience with sample frame development and sample selection experience, including experience implementing different sampling methods (e.g., simple random sampling, proportionate stratified random sampling, and disproportionate stratified random sampling). Computer Programmer with experience receiving 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.

Criteria	Requirement
Facilities and Systems	<p>Vendors must currently have the following facilities and systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A secure commercial work environment. • Meet all local commercial code requirements. • Physical facilities, electronic equipment and software to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ receive sample files from participating agencies; ○ process and store all data collection materials; ○ conduct survey implementation (e.g., scanners, printers, computer-assisted telephone interview [CATI] or alternative electronic data collection system, live monitoring of interviewers, data entry system); ○ electronic survey management system to track fielded surveys throughout the data collection period; ○ call center or telephone bank facilities for telephone survey implementation; and ○ upload HHCAHPS data to the Data Center. • Vendors must conduct all HHCAHPS business operations within the continental United States. This requirement applies to all staff and subcontractors.
Working with Other Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure compliance with all HHCAHPS protocols, a vendor that works with other organizations (as a subcontractor, partner, or prime through collaboration, merger or acquisition) must disclose and describe the details of this working relationship to the HHCAHPS Survey Coordination Team.

Criteria	Requirement
Security Policies	<p>Vendors and all subcontractors must implement systems and security policies which protect the security of personally identifiable information (PII) and Protected Health Information (PHI) as defined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This includes sample data and survey data. Vendors will be required to submit security policies and maintain confidentiality agreement forms for all vendor and subcontractor staff. Submissions must describe in sufficient detail policies and procedures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorizing and de-authorizing individuals to access PII/PHI and survey data (including background checks, training, and signed agreements). • Preventing unauthorized individuals from accessing PII/PHI and survey data in physical format (including key card/locked access and locked file cabinets). • Preventing unauthorized individuals from accessing data in electronic format (including password protections, firewalls, data encryption software, personnel access limitation procedures, and virus and spyware protection). • Safeguarding PII/PHI and survey data in physical format against loss or destruction (including fire and building safety codes). • Safeguarding PII/PHI and survey data in electronic format against loss or destruction (e.g., offsite daily backups). • Establishing a disaster recovery plan for survey data in the event of a disaster. • Destruction of PII/PHI and survey data when specified.
Statistical Sampling Process	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys where a sample of individuals (as defined above) is selected, using simple random sampling, proportionate stratified random sampling, or disproportionate stratified random sampling. • Construct a sample frame that includes all patients who meet survey eligibility. • Work with individual agencies to obtain patient data for sampling (i.e., must be able to accept data electronically).

Criteria	Requirement
Mail-only Survey Administration	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, commercial facilities, equipment, and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a random, unique, de-identified identification number to each sampled patient. • Obtain and verify addresses of sampled patients. • Print according to HHCAHPS formatting guidelines for professional-quality survey questionnaires (containing single-coded questions, code-all-that apply questions) and materials. • Merge and print sample patient name and address and the name of the HHA on personalized mail survey cover letters and print unique sample identification on the survey questionnaire. • Assemble and mail survey materials. • Track fielded surveys throughout the protocol. • Receive and process (key entry or scanning) completed questionnaires. • Track and identify nonrespondents for follow-up mailing. • Provide a toll-free customer support line to receive and address telephone calls from sample members within 48 hours for all languages offered by the vendor. • Assign final status codes in accordance with HHCAHPS coding requirements to reflect the results of attempt(s) to obtain a completed interview with each sampled patient.
Telephone-only Survey Administration	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, commercial facilities, equipment and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a random, unique, de-identified identification number to each sampled patient. • Obtain and verify telephone numbers of sampled patients. • Develop computer programs for electronically administering the survey (for CATI). • Collect data using CATI or alternative electronic system that allows seamless administration of single-coded questions, code-all-that-apply questions. • Track fielded surveys throughout the protocol. • Schedule callbacks to nonrespondents at varying times of the day and week. • Provide a toll-free customer support line to receive and address telephone calls from sample members within 48 hours for all languages offered by the vendor. • Assign final status codes in accordance with HHCAHPS coding guidelines to reflect the results of attempt(s) to obtain a completed interview with each sampled patient. • Conduct monitoring of interviewers.

Criteria	Requirement
Mixed-Mode (Mail with Telephone Follow-Up) Survey Administration	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, commercial facilities, equipment, and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to all mail-only and telephone-only survey administration requirements (described above). • Track sampled patients via an electronic tracking system from mail survey through telephone follow-up activities.
Data Processing and File Submission	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, facilities, equipment and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan, key, or process responses to single coded questions, code-all-that-apply questions from completed surveys. • Develop data files and edit and clean data according to standard protocols. • Follow all data cleaning and data submission rules, including verifying that data files are de-identified and contain no duplicate patient records. • Export data from the electronic data collection system to an XML template and confirm that the data were exported correctly and that the XML files are formatted correctly and contain the correct data headers and data records. • Submit data electronically in the specified format (XML) via the HHCAHPS secured website. • Work with the Coordination Team to resolve data problems and data submission problems.
Adherence to All Protocols, Specifications, and Training Session Requirements	
Survey Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the self-administered Introduction to the HHCAHPS Survey Training and participate in any subsequent HHCAHPS Vendor Update Training sessions. At a minimum, the Project Manager must attend these trainings. • Ensure that appropriate subcontractor staff members with significant roles or who are in receipt of patient identifying data participate in all vendor training sessions. • The Project Manager must complete a post-training certification exercise, also referred to as a <i>Training Certification Form</i>, after completing the Introduction to the HHCAHPS Survey Training.
Administer the Survey According to All Survey Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and follow all procedures described in the <i>Home Health Care CAHPS Survey Protocols and Guidelines Manual</i> that are applicable to the selected survey data collection mode(s).

Criteria	Requirement
Adherence to Quality Assurance Guidelines and Participation in QA Activities	
Quality Control Procedures	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, facilities, equipment, and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate well-documented quality control procedures (as applicable) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in-house training of staff involved in survey operations; ○ receipt and processing of monthly patient information files, sample frame construction and sample selection; ○ printing, assembling, mailing, and recording receipt of survey questionnaires; ○ telephone administration of survey, including live monitoring capabilities; ○ coding and editing of survey data and survey-related materials; ○ scanning or keying in survey data; ○ preparation of final person-level data files for submission; and ○ all other functions and processes that affect the administration of the HHCAHPS Survey.
Participation in QA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in any conference calls and site visits requested by the Coordination Team as part of overall quality monitoring activities. Site visits will be conducted with all approved vendors. • 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.
Subcontractor Requirements	
Subcontractor	<p>Any survey vendor using a subcontractor in any capacity on the HHCAHPS Survey is required to complete the relevant sections of the Vendor Application Form (<i>Appendix A</i> of the <i>HHCAHPS Survey Protocols and Guidelines Manual</i>) about each of its subcontractors. Information requested on the Vendor Application Form about subcontractor capabilities is similar to that requested for vendors.</p> <p>Details must be provided about the capabilities and capacity of the subcontractor to handle mail survey, telephone survey, and mixed-mode survey activities. Further, specific information must also be provided about the subcontractor’s quality assurance practices, data security policies, and facilities and systems. Please see the vendor application for more details.</p>

Criteria	Requirement
Documentation Requirements	
Documentation	<p>Vendors must demonstrate prior experience and currently have adequate staffing, commercial facilities, equipment and software to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep electronic or hardcopy files of individuals trained, and training dates; • maintain electronic or hardcopy records of interviewers monitored (for telephone administration); • maintain electronic or hardcopy records of mailing dates; • maintain other documentation necessary to allow the HHCAHPS Coordination Team to review procedures implemented during a site visit; and • maintain documentation of actions required (and taken) as a result of any decisions made during site visits by the Coordination Team.
Additional Requirements	
Additional	<p>CMS and the Coordination Team reserve the right to request additional information from applicant organizations. Information requested may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayer Identification Number; • website address; • photographs of applicant organization’s facilities and systems; • resumes of key staff; and • additional descriptions of processes, including treatment of confidential data, control or tracking systems, quality assurance practices, and XML file construction.