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# CAHPS Provider Resource Guide



## CAHPS® (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems)

Every year, a random sample of Sunflower members is surveyed about their experience with their doctors, services, and health plans. It is an important component of ensuring that patients are satisfied, not only with their health outcomes, but also with their healthcare experience.

CAHPS surveys allow patients to evaluate the aspects of care delivery that matter the most to them. At Sunflower, we are committed to partnering with our providers to deliver an outstanding patient experience. And as a provider, you are the most critical component of that experience. We want to ensure that you know exactly how your patients are evaluating your care. Please take a moment to review and familiarize yourself with some of the key topics included in the survey.

### Provider Engagement Collateral

- Access to Care
  - Provider Quick Tips Guide
  - Patient Experience
- Learning Series:  
[\*\*cahpsprovider.com/  
provider\*\*](https://cahpsprovider.com/provider)

# CAHPS Provider Resource Guide .....



## CAHPS Measure: Getting Needed Care

The Getting Needed Care measure assesses the ease with which patients received their care, tests, or treatment. It also assesses how often patients were able to get specialist appointments scheduled when needed.

**Incorporate the following into your daily practice to positively impact the patient experience:**

- Office staff should help coordinate specialty appointments for urgent cases.
- Encourage patients to register for access to their member portal, where they can view their lab results with follow-up instructions from their provider.
- Make it easy for patients to locate office hours and what options patients have outside of office hours.
- Offer appointments or refills via text and/or email.



## CAHPS Measure: Getting Appointments and Care Quickly

The Getting Appointments and Care Quickly measure assesses how often patients got the care they needed as soon as they needed it, and how often appointment wait times exceeded 15 minutes.

**Incorporate the following into your daily practice:**

- Ensure that a few appointments each day are available to accommodate urgent visits.
- Offer appointments with a nurse practitioner or physician assistant for short-notice appointments.
- Maintain an effective triage system to ensure that frail and/or very sick patients are seen right away or provide alternate care via phone and urgent care.
- Transparency around wait times: Keep patients informed if there is a longer wait time than expected and give them an option to reschedule.
- Make information around “drop-in” hours available and accessible to your patients. Include this information in visit summary forms.
- Provide scripting and educational offerings for patient access and front office staff, as well as the personal provider team.

# CAHPS Provider Resource Guide



## CAHPS Measure: Care Coordination

The Care Coordination measure assesses providers' assistance with managing the disparate and confusing healthcare system, including access to medical records, timely follow-up on test results, and education on prescription medications.

### Incorporate the following into your daily practice:

- Ensure there are open appointments for patients recently discharged from a facility.
- Integrate PCP and specialty practices through EMR or fax to get reports promptly.
- Ask patients if they have seen any other providers; discuss visits to specialty care as needed.
- Encourage patients to bring their medications to each visit.

### Provider Engagement Collateral

- Care Coordination
- Ten Elements for Using Teach-Back
- Patient Experience Learning Series: [cahpsprovider.com/provider](https://cahpsprovider.com/provider)



## CAHPS Measure: How Well Doctors Communicate

The How Well Doctors Communicate measure assesses patients' perception of the quality of communication with their doctor. Consider using the teach-back method to ensure patients understand their health information.

### What is teach-back?

- A way to ensure that you, the healthcare provider, have explained information clearly.
- It is not a test or quiz; rather it is a way to ask the patient (or a family member) to explain in their own words what they need to know or do.
- A way to check for understanding and, if needed, re-explain and check again.
- A research-based health literacy intervention that improves patient-provider communication and patient health outcomes. For more information about the teach-back method, see page 9.<sup>1</sup>



## CAHPS Measure: Rating of Health Care Quality

The CAHPS survey asks patients to rate the overall quality of their healthcare on a 0-10 scale.

### Incorporate the following into your daily practice:

- Encourage patients to make their routine appointments for checkups or follow-up visits as soon as they can — weeks or even months in advance.
- Ensure that open care gaps are addressed during each patient visit.
- Make use of the provider portal when requesting prior authorizations.

<sup>1</sup>Sources include: National Library of Medicine (NLM) at the National Institute of Health (NIH) [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov); "Interventions to Improve Care for Patients with Limited Health Literacy" (Sudore and Schillinger)

# Access to Care

Access to medical care, including primary care and specialist services, are key elements of quality care.

## Each year, the CAHPS® survey asks questions like:

- In the last 6 months, how often did you get an appointment to see a specialist as soon as you needed?
- In the last 6 months, how often was it easy to get the care, tests or treatment you needed?
- In the last 6 months, when you needed care right away, how often did you get care as soon as you needed?
- In the last 6 months, how often did you get an appointment for a check-up or routine care as soon as you needed?
- In the last 6 months, how often did you see the person you came to see within 15 minutes of your appointment time?



## Ensure your patients are satisfied with their ease of access by:

- Seeing patients within access and availability standards.
- Scheduling appointments in a reasonable window for each request.
- Following up with patients after specialist referrals to ensure that care is coordinated.
- Ensuring all information for specialists, tests, and procedure authorizations is provided and following up as necessary.
- Reducing time in the waiting room to no more than 15 minutes from the appointment time.



## Helpful tips to provide the needed care to your patients:

**Sunflower continually monitors and evaluates measures that reflect appropriate coordination of care practices. These include:**

- Reviewing medications with your patients.
- Offering to schedule specialist and lab appointments while your patients are in the office.
- Reminding your patients about annual flu shots and other immunizations.
- Making sure your patients know you also are working with specialists on their care. Ensure you receive notes from specialists about the patient's care and reach out to specialists if you have not gotten consultation notes. Follow up on all authorizations requested for your patient. Tell your patient the results of all test and procedures. Share decision making with patients to help them manage their care.
- Contacting your patients to remind them when it's time for preventive care services such as annual wellness exams, recommended cancer screenings, and follow-up care for ongoing conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.

Below are some tips you can follow to improve the quality measures listed below:



## Getting Needed Care

- For urgent specialty appointments, office staff should help coordinate with the appropriate specialty office.
- If a patient portal is available, encourage patients and caregivers to view results there.



## Getting Appointments and Care Quickly

- Maintain an effective triage system to ensure that frail and/or very sick patients are seen right away or provide alternate care via phone and urgent care.
- For patients who want to be seen on short notice but cannot access their provider, offer appointments with a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.
- Ensure that a few appointments each day are available to accommodate urgent visits.
- Address 15-minute wait times by ensuring that patients receive staff attention.
- Keep patients informed if there is a wait longer than 15 minutes and give them the opportunity to reschedule.



## Care Coordination

- Ensure there are open appointments for patients recently discharged from a facility.
- Integrate PCP and specialty practices through EMR or fax to get reports on time.
- Ask patients if they've seen any other providers. If you are aware that specialty care has occurred, please mention it and discuss as needed.
- Encourage patients to bring their medications to each visit.



## Rating of Healthcare

- Encourage patients to make their routine appointments for checkups or follow-up visits as soon as they can — weeks or even months in advance.



# Coordination of Care



## What is coordination of care and who provides it?

Coordination of care requires proactively identifying patient needs, organizing care, and communicating vital information at the right time to the right people.

**Coordination can occur among various parties but often includes:**

- Primary care provider.
- Specialty providers.
- Behavioral health practitioners.
- Inpatient hospitals.
- Skilled nursing facilities.
- Home care agencies.
- Labs and other diagnostic services.
- Family and caregivers.
- Health plan care managers.
- Other care managers.



## Why is coordination of care important?

**Appropriate care coordination and the availability of pertinent and up-to-date information leads to many positive benefits, including:**

- Safer and more effective care.
- Lower admission and readmission rates.
- Fewer care complications and delays.
- Smoother care transitions.
- Increased efficiency and reduced costs.
- Improved health and satisfaction for the patient.

## The provider's role:

Sunflower expects providers to follow these practice guidelines in coordinating care for our members. Our health plan and associated providers are rated and evaluated based on the ability to successfully carry out these practices. Please note that the care coordination measures are specifically evaluated in our annual member experience surveys (CAHPS®).

# Coordination of Care

## Important provider coordination of care practices

<b>Labs &amp; X-rays*</b>	Tell your patients when to expect lab, X-ray, and other test results and deliver the results on time.
<b>Other providers*</b>	Assist your patients in arranging care with other practitioners and services.
<b>Specialist referrals*</b>	Follow up on referrals and discuss your patients' current specialist care.
<b>Medical records*</b>	Obtain relevant medical records prior to appointments and review with your patients.
<b>Prescriptions*</b>	Regularly discuss and update your patients' current prescription medications.
<b>Preventive care*</b>	Remind your patients about important prevention measures, such as regular flu shots.
<b>Fall prevention</b>	Discuss the risk of falling with your patients and fall prevention.
<b>Post-discharge care</b>	Ensure appropriate follow-up care is in place after your patients' hospitalizations or emergency care.
<b>After-hours care</b>	Ensure that your patients know how to receive care when your office is closed.
<b>Patient feedback</b>	Encourage your patients to ask questions and express their needs and priorities; discuss and monitor your patients' perception of physical and emotional health yearly.
<b>Care management</b>	Collaborate with Sunflower's care management programs for patients with coordination or educational needs.
<b>Community Connections</b>	Refer patients with community assistance or social determinants of health needs to <b>sunflower.findhelp.com</b> . We help connect members to local food, housing, financial, and transportation services.

\*CAHPS®-related measure



Additional information on the topic of Care Coordination can be found at [ahrq.gov/ncepcr/care/coordination.html](https://ahrq.gov/ncepcr/care/coordination.html).

# Annual Flu Vaccine

**Getting a flu shot will often protect patients from getting a serious case of the flu.**

Vaccination may not always prevent infection, but it can make symptoms less severe and reduce the risk of patient hospitalization. Here are a few clinical strategies that can be used during flu season:

## Empower Staff

**Designate a “flu lead” to plan and implement strategies:**

- Identify strategies that can be easily used in your clinic or practice.
- Assign tasks to each employee.
- Develop a plan to implement more strategies over time.

**Train all staff to communicate about the flu vaccine in the same way:**

- Use the “presumptive approach” to set the tone that getting a flu vaccine is routine.
- Assume that patients will get vaccinated.
- Discuss sick visits as an opportunity to immunize and under what circumstances patients should be vaccinated.
- Encourage staff to use every interaction to promote the flu vaccine. For example:
  - Front desk staff can share VIS ahead of time via email or at check-in.
  - Medical assistants can encourage vaccination.
  - If patient or patient declines, the provider can ease specific concerns.

## Enhance Clinical Workflow

**Leverage the EHR or immunization registry to screen all patients:**

- Prior to the first patient of the day, generate a list of scheduled patients who still need a flu vaccine.
- Use prompts/flags to remind clinicians when patients are due for a vaccine.
- Encourage medical assistants to use routing slips or other reports to remind physicians to offer the flu vaccine to patients.

**Make it easy for patients to get their flu shot:**

- Administer flu vaccines and any other shots at all appointments, including sick visits. Consider co-administering with the current COVID-19 vaccine.
- Start scheduling flu shot appointments early; prioritize high-risk patients and children who may need two doses.
- If possible, consider shot-only, drive-up, weekend, or evening appointments.

## Additional Considerations:

- Hesitancy is only a small part of the puzzle. Some people have significant anti-vaccine attitudes, but a much larger portion of the population simply doesn't prioritize vaccination. This group should be the ideal target of vaccination campaigns.
- Make getting a vaccine worthwhile. Since vaccination is primarily a problem of motivation, consider using financial reward incentives or other techniques to spur uptake.
- Focus on every aspect of the vaccine process. An ideal vaccine uptake program should include all of these components:
  - Reminding members when they're due for a vaccine.
  - Educating members about the risks of disease.
  - Reminding providers via electronic health records when member vaccines are due.

Sources: CDC, California Department of Public Health, the Center for Advanced Hindsight, the Centene Center for Health Transformation



Interested in learning more about CAHPS?  
Contact your Provider Representative at  
[providerengagement@sunflowerhealthplan.com](mailto:providerengagement@sunflowerhealthplan.com).



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