ICH CAHPS
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the ICH CAHPS survey?
A: The In-Center Hemodialysis Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (ICH CAHPS) survey instrument was designed to assess patients’ experience of the care they have received at dialysis facilities. The survey was developed in 2003 by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in collaboration with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the CAHPS Consortium. The survey was endorsed by the National Quality Forum in November 2007.

Q: Who is required to participate in the ICH CAHPS survey?
A: Medicare-certified dialysis facilities with 30 or more survey-eligible patients in the previous calendar year that have received their Medicare Provider Number (CCN) before December 31 of the year preceding the performance year will be required to contract with an approved vendor to administer the survey and to provide data to the vendor.

If your dialysis facility served 29 or fewer survey-eligible patients in the year prior to the performance year, you can file a Facility Non-Participation Form on the ICH CAHPS website.

CMS recommends that dialysis facilities target a minimum of 200 completed ICH CAHPS surveys annually. Facilities that cannot achieve 200 completed surveys should sample all of their survey-eligible patients.

Patients are excluded if any of the following applies to them.
- They are under the age of 18;
- They are receiving hospice care;
- They are institutionalized (e.g., they are in a nursing home or other long-term care facility, or they are in jail or in prison); or
- They received hemodialysis on an outpatient basis from their current facility for less than three months.

Q: What does the ICH CAHPS survey measure?
A: Items within the ICH CAHPS survey instrument include the following:
- Nephrologist’s communication and caring
- Quality of dialysis center care and operations
- Providing information to patients
- Global rating of kidney doctors
- Global rating of dialysis center staff
- Global rating of the dialysis center

Q: How many patients will be surveyed?
A: The ICH CAHPS Survey Coordination Team will randomly select 240 eligible patients to be surveyed per CCN. If your dialysis center has fewer than 240 eligible patients, all eligible patients will be included in the sample.
Q: How is the patient sample chosen?
A: The ICH CAHPS Survey Coordination Team will sample patients with dialysis facility visits within a specific sampling window. The sampling window is typically from April through June for the fall survey administration and July through September for the spring survey administration.

Q: How often will the ICH CAHPS survey be conducted?
A: The ICH CAHPS survey occurs twice a year: once in the spring and once in the fall. The spring survey is generally conducted between April and July, while the fall survey is generally conducted between October and January.

Q: What is the status of the ICH CAHPS implementation?
A: Dialysis facilities must use a vendor to collect data twice a year, once in the spring (usually between April and July) and once in the fall (usually between October and January). The ICH CAHPS data collected biannually is submitted to CMS to support public reporting on the Dialysis Facility Compare website. ICH CAHPS survey results are publicly reported after a Medicare-certified dialysis facility has completed two semiannual surveys.

Q: What is publicly reported on Dialysis Facility Compare?
A: Each survey domain and global question is reported publicly on Dialysis Facility Compare:

- **Global Items**
  - Rating of Nephrologist
  - Rating of Dialysis Center Staff
  - Rating of Dialysis Center

- **Composite Measures**
  - Nephrologists’ Communication and Caring
  - Quality of Dialysis Center and Operations
  - Providing Information to Patients

A dialysis facility must have a minimum of 30 completed surveys within the two administrations (spring and fall) being reported to have the data publicly displayed.

Q: Is ICH CAHPS a pay-for-reporting or pay-for-performance program?
A: The ICH CAHPS survey is a pay-for-performance program, meaning part of the facility’s Medicare payment is based on its achievement on certain performance metrics, and it is one of the requirements of the Medicare End-Stage Renal Disease Quality Incentive Program. Facilities that fail to achieve a specific total performance score as set by CMS each performance year face a payment reduction of up to 2% of their Medicare reimbursement.

Q: What are the approved survey modes for ICH CAHPS?
A: Press Ganey offers different ways the survey can be conducted: mail-only methodology, phone-only methodology, and a mixed mail and phone methodology.

- **Mail-only methodology:** Press Ganey will mail a prenotification letter, followed by two mail packets that include a cover letter, the survey, and a business reply envelope (BRE).
Phone-only methodology: Press Ganey will mail a prenotification letter and make up to 10 telephone attempts to each patient selected for the survey. The attempts will be made at different times of the day, on different days of the week, spread across different weeks of the month to maximize the likelihood that we will contact your patients.

Mixed mail and phone methodology: Press Ganey will mail a prenotification letter, mail one mail packet, including a cover letter, the survey, and a BRE, and make up to 10 telephone attempts to each patient selected for the survey. The attempts will be made at different times of the day, on different days of the week, spread across different weeks of the month to maximize the likelihood that we will contact your patients.

Q: Must organizations contract with a vendor to complete the survey administration?
A: Yes. Dialysis facilities must designate a certified vendor to complete the ICH CAHPS survey administration. CMS contracts with vendors to administer and collect data for the CAHPS survey. Press Ganey is a CMS-approved vendor for the ICH CAHPS survey.

Q: How do I authorize Press Ganey as my vendor for ICH CAHPS?
A: Instructions for vendor authorization are available on the ICH CAHPS website. If you have additional questions, please contact your Press Ganey Account Manager.

Q: If I am a hospital-based facility, which CCN do I use?
A: You must use the provider number for the dialysis center, not the hospital CCN. This is the number that the dialysis center uses to bill Medicare for outpatient treatments.

Q: Can Press Ganey provide XML files or raw data files?
A: Because patients receiving ICH treatment are an especially vulnerable population, relying on an ICH facility and its staff for life-sustaining care, the CMS ICH CAHPS Coordination Team does not allow demographic-identifying information to be shared. As such, Press Ganey is unable to provide ICH CAHPS clients with survey images, audio files, raw data files, XML files, or any other patient information due to CMS patient privacy rules.

Q: What type of reporting will Press Ganey provide?
A: Press Ganey will provide an unofficial ICH CAHPS report after the data collection period has ended. Due to CMS patient privacy rules, the About You questions will be suppressed from the report, but survey questions will have data reported for any question with a response.

Disclaimer: Information and timelines presented herein are based solely upon Press Ganey's experience with other CAHPS initiatives and our interpretation of CMS rulemaking and policy statements. Official CMS policy is distributed as part of CMS's normal rulemaking process. Information regarding the use of a visit-specific survey for targeted performance improvement is Press Ganey’s recommendation based on our experience and expertise. The information herein does not represent the views or policies of CMS or any other government agency.