

Appendix B

Composite Quality Indexes

This report presents results from five standard multi-item measures from the CAHPS Medicaid managed care adult and child surveys, each capturing a separate dimension of quality. Each composite score represents a combination of answers to its respective component questions, as explained below. The five indexes and their component questions are:

Getting Needed Care

- With the choices your health plan gave you, how much of a problem, if any, was it to get a personal doctor or nurse (for your child) you are happy with?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I didn't get a new personal doctor or nurse.
- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, was it to get a referral to a specialist that you (your child) needed to see?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I didn't need to see a specialist in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, was it to get the care (for your child) you or a doctor believed necessary?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I had no visits in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, were delays in (your child's) health care while you waited for approval from your health plan?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I had no visits in the last 6 months.

Getting Care Quickly

- In the last 6 months, when you called during regular office hours, how often did you get the help or advice you needed (for your child)?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I didn't call for help or advice during regular office hours in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how often did you (your child) get an appointment for regular or routine health care as soon as you wanted?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I didn't need an appointment for regular or routine care in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, when you (your child) needed care right away for an illness or injury, how often did you (your child) get care as soon as you wanted?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I didn't need care right away for an illness or injury in the last 6 months.

- In the last 6 months, how often did you (your child) wait in the doctor's office or clinic more than 15 minutes past your appointment time to see the person you went to see?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.

How Well Doctors Communicate

- In the last 6 months, how often did (your child's) doctors or other health providers listen carefully to you?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how often did (your child's) doctors or other health providers explain things in a way you could understand?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how often did (your child's) doctors or other health providers show respect for what you had to say?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how often did doctors or other health providers spend enough time with you (your child)?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.

Courteous and Helpful Office Staff

- In the last 6 months, how often did office staff at a (your child's) doctor's office or clinic treat you (your child) with courtesy and respect?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how often were office staff at a (your child's) doctor's office or clinic as helpful as you thought they should be?
Response choices: never, sometimes, usually, always, I had no visits in the last 6 months.

Customer Service

- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, was it to find or understand information in the written materials?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I didn't look for information from my health plan in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, was it to get the help you needed when you called your (your child's) health plan's customer service?
Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I didn't call my health plan's customer service in the last 6 months.
- In the last 6 months, how much of a problem, if any, did you have with paperwork for your (your child's) health plan?

Response choices: a big problem, a small problem, not a problem, I didn't have any experience with paperwork for my health plan in the last 6 months.

Each composite is calculated based on an unweighted average of responses from the component questions.¹ In some previous CAHPS surveys, the composite scores have been computed and presented as means (scaled continuously from 1 to 3). But because interpreting mean values can be difficult or ambiguous, an algorithm was developed to allow reporting of the response distribution of the composites as percentages. Percentages, rather than means, are presented as the composite scores in this report.

The algorithm used to translate each set of component responses into a summary composite percentage is:

1. Combine "never" and "sometimes" responses into one category for those composite questions where those responses apply. An exception is the item "...how often did you wait in the doctor's office or clinic more than 15 minutes past your appointment time...". For this item only, "usually" and "always" are combined and the scoring is reversed for consistency of meaning within the Getting Care Quickly composite.
2. For each component question, count the number of responses to each response category, and then calculate the *average proportion* responding to each category across all questions in the composite.
3. The result represents the percent responding to each category – on average, for the combination of component items -- with the sum equaling 100%. The outcome can thus be understood as a measure of the underlying composite concept. For example, 75% of a plan's members indicate that their doctors "usually or always" communicate well; or 15% of a plan's members indicate that getting needed care is a "big problem."

¹ Composite scores are conventionally presented as group, rather than individual, measures, probably because missing data is common and composites could therefore not be computed for many respondents.