

# Frequently Asked Questions About the CAHPS® Hospice Survey Star Ratings

## General

- **What is the purpose of CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings?**

CMS reports CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings to provide consumers with a quick and easy way to assess the CAHPS Hospice Survey family caregiver experience of care quality measures that are provided on the Care Compare Web site. Star Ratings also allow consumers to more easily compare hospices using a familiar five-star scale.

- **Which data are used to calculate CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings?**

CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings are calculated using data from the CAHPS Hospice Survey, which is completed by family caregivers of patients who received hospice care before they died. For more information on the CAHPS Hospice Survey, see <https://hospicecahpsurvey.org/#AboutTheSurvey>.

In keeping with the scoring approach used to calculate CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measure scores for public reporting, CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings are calculated using top-box scores, which represent the proportion of respondents who give the most favorable response(s) for each measure.

- **Which CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings are publicly reported?**

CMS calculates a Star Rating for each of the CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures, as well as a summary Star Rating, known as the Family Caregiver Survey Rating, which is a weighted average of the Star Ratings for each of the quality measures. Only the Family Caregiver Survey Rating is publicly reported on Care Compare.

- **Do hospices see their CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings before they are publicly reported?**

Hospices have the opportunity to see their CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings for each of the individual quality measures and the Family Caregiver Survey Rating summary star in their official CMS Preview Report during the provider preview period prior to each update of Care Compare.

- **How often are CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings updated?**

CMS updates CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings every other quarter (i.e., every six months). CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings, including the cut points between stars, are recalculated every other quarter rather than every quarter to allow for stable estimation of the cut points. CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings were publicly reported for the first time in August 2022.

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## Hospice Eligibility

- **For which hospices are the Family Caregiver Survey Rating summary star publicly reported?**

A Family Caregiver Summary Rating summary star is publicly reported only for those hospices that are eligible for public reporting on the Care Compare Web site. In addition, a hospice must have at least 75 respondents (completed questionnaires) in the eight-quarter Star Rating reporting period to receive a Star Rating for that reporting period. Star Ratings are not calculated or publicly reported for hospices with fewer than 75 respondents; however, their measure scores may be used to determine Star Ratings cut points and may be publicly reported on Care Compare.

- **Why is it necessary to have at least 75 respondents to receive a Family Caregiver Survey Rating?**

A Family Caregiver Survey Rating summary star based on fewer than 75 respondents does not have the required statistical reliability to distinguish between hospices' performance.

## Methodology of CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings

- **How are CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings assigned?**

Calculating CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings is a multistep process.

1. CAHPS Hospice Survey responses are converted to top-box scores (scores that reflect the proportion of respondents who gave the most favorable response(s)) and then adjusted for case mix and mode of survey administration.
2. The eight quarters of data are split into four six-month (or two-quarter) periods of time. Within each six-month period:
  - a. Hospice-level measure scores are calculated as the weighted average of scores in each included quarter.
  - b. For each measure:
    - i. Cut points between adjacent star ratings one to five are assigned based on a clustering algorithm. Only hospices meeting a minimum sample size criterion are used in the clustering algorithm for stability.
    - ii. An adjustment factor is calculated that accounts for the difference in mean scores between these larger hospices and all hospices projected to have publicly reported measure scores.
3. The cut points and adjustment factors are averaged across the four six-month periods, and the mean adjustment factor is used to adjust the mean cut points. The adjusted cut points are applied to the eight-quarter CAHPS Hospice Survey measure scores to determine Star Ratings for each of the CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures.

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4. A summary Star Rating, known as the Family Caregiver Survey Rating, is calculated as a weighted average of the Star Ratings of the CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures.

For more details, and examples of these calculations, please see the Technical Notes for CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings available at <https://hospicecahpsurvey.org/en/star-ratings>.

- **Why does the number of hospices receiving five stars differ from one Star Rating reporting period to the next?**

CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings are assigned in a way that minimizes differences *within* star groups and maximizes differences *between* star groups. The clustering algorithm empirically determines the number of hospices in each Star Rating category. CMS does not force a certain percentage or number of hospices into a specified Star Rating category.

- **If our hospice's CAHPS Hospice Survey measure scores are higher than the national average, why is our Family Caregiver Survey Rating not equal to five?**

A five-star rating denotes the highest category of hospice performance; not all hospices with above average CAHPS Hospice Survey scores attain this designation.

- **Could our hospice's Family Caregiver Survey Rating change from one public reporting period to the next even if our CAHPS Hospice Survey measure scores don't change?**

The distribution of hospices across the Star Rating categories changes each time Star Ratings are calculated, as the oldest two quarters of data are removed and the newest two quarters of data are added. Since the cut points used to determine stars are recomputed every other quarter (i.e., every six months), the scores that designate each Star Rating cluster may change. Thus, a hospice that achieved the same measure scores over time could find itself assigned to a different star category when new Star Ratings are calculated, if the distribution of hospices overall resulted in more hospices with higher or lower overall measure scores.

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### CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings and Hospice Quality Reporting Program Annual Payment Update

- **Do CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings impact our hospice's Annual Payment Update (APU)?**

CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings are not used in the determination of a hospice's compliance with the annual payment update requirements.

### Revised Survey and CAHPS Hospice Survey Star Ratings

- **What revisions were made to the CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures beginning with Q2 2025 decedents?**

The original version of the CAHPS Hospice Survey was administered to caregivers of patients who died while receiving hospice care between Q2 2015 and Q1 2025. This version of the survey was used to calculate eight CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures and corresponding measure and summary Star Ratings. A revised version of the CAHPS Hospice Survey was introduced beginning with Q2 2025 decedents. The revised version is shorter and simpler than the original version and includes new questions on topics suggested by stakeholders. The revised version includes the following changes to CAHPS Hospice Survey measures:

- One new measure was introduced (Care Preferences)
  - One of the original measures was substantially revised (Getting Hospice Care Training)
    - Conceptually similar but uses one item instead of several items
  - One of the original measures was slightly revised (Hospice Team Communication)
    - Removes one item and makes slight wording changes
- **How will changes to the CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures affect Star Ratings? When will changes to Star Ratings occur?**

The February 2026 Care Compare refresh will be the last refresh using data from only the original survey. No changes will be made until after this refresh.

During the transition period (beginning with the May 2026 Care Compare refresh and concluding with the November 2027 Care Compare refresh), scores and Star Ratings will be calculated by combining scores from quarters that used the original survey and quarters that used the revised survey. CMS will not publicly report Star Ratings for the new Care Preferences measure or the substantially revised Getting Hospice Care Training measure until there are eight quarters of data that fielded the revised survey. Therefore, scores and Star Ratings for these two measures will not be reported during the transition period. Star Ratings will continue to be calculated for the seven original measures that will not undergo

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substantial specification changes. The Family Caregiver Survey Rating will be based solely on these seven measures during the transition period.

The February 2028 Care Compare refresh will be the first refresh that uses eight quarters of data from the revised survey. Starting with this refresh, CMS will calculate Star Ratings for the new Care Preference and substantially revised Getting Hospice Care Training measures, and the Family Caregiver Survey Rating summary Star Rating will be based on all nine measures. As before, only the summary Star Rating will be publicly reported. The summary Star Rating and the Star Rating for each of the nine CAHPS Hospice Survey quality measures will be shown on the Provider Preview reports available to hospices before each refresh.