

Appendix F

Interviewing Guidelines for Phone Surveys

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CAHPS Hospice Survey

Interviewing Guidelines for Phone Surveys

Overview

These guidelines address expectations for interviewers conducting the CAHPS Hospice Survey by phone. To collect the highest quality data possible, phone interviewers must follow these guidelines while conducting phone interviews.

As an interviewer, your role in the success of this survey is important. You will interact with many caregivers, and you are the person who assures the caregivers that their participation is important.

Due to the nature of this survey, you may encounter caregivers who express grief or other emotions; therefore, it will be necessary for you to familiarize yourself with your organization's Distressed Respondent Procedures.

General Interviewing Techniques

As an interviewer you must:

- read the script from the interviewer screens (reciting the survey from memory can lead to unnecessary errors and missed updates to the script)
- read all questions and response choices in the indicated order and exactly as worded, so that all caregivers are answering the same question. Questions that are re-worded can bias the caregiver's response and the overall survey results.
- read all transitional statements
- never skip over a question because you think the caregiver has answered it already
- not attempt to increase the likelihood of the caregiver providing one answer over another answer
- speak in a courteous tone
 - During the course of the survey, use of neutral acknowledgement words such as the following is permitted:
 - Thank you
 - Alright
 - Okay
 - I understand, or I see
 - Yes, Ma'am
 - Yes, Sir
- adjust the pace of the CAHPS Hospice Survey interview to be conducive to the needs of the caregiver
- maintain a professional and neutral relationship with the caregiver at all times
- not provide personal information or opinions about the survey
- listen carefully to any caregiver questions and offer concise responses. You may not provide extra information or lengthy explanations.
- tell the caregiver that there are no more questions and thank the caregiver for his or her time at the end of the survey. The interviewer may say, "Have a good (day/evening)." if appropriate.

- not leave messages on answering machines or with household members. Interviewers should attempt to re-contact the caregiver to complete the CAHPS Hospice Survey.
- not administer the CAHPS Hospice Survey to any caregiver whom you know personally or professionally

Introduction and Refusal Avoidance

For optimal response rates, it is important that phone interviewers attempt to avoid phone refusals from the caregiver. The introduction and initial moments of the interview are critical to gaining cooperation from the caregiver.

Interviewers must:

- be prepared to answer questions about the survey by familiarizing themselves with the survey and the FAQ document
 - avoid long pauses - be ready to answer questions and address caregiver concerns
 - study and thoroughly familiarize yourself with the frequently asked questions (FAQ) list before you begin conducting phone interviews so that you are knowledgeable about the CAHPS Hospice Survey
- read the phone script introductions verbatim, unless the caregiver interrupts to ask a question or voices a concern
 - not rush through the introduction
 - The interviewer may use the pronoun appropriate to the decedent's sex ("he or she" or "him or her") if the caregiver mentions the decedent's sex
- speak clearly and politely to establish a rapport with the caregiver
- attempt to gain cooperation; if the caregiver refuses, the interviewer should politely end the call. The interviewer should not argue with or antagonize the caregiver.
- request to speak with the sampled caregiver if calling the caregiver number and a business is reached. If the caregiver states they are at work and cannot speak, the interviewer should attempt to reschedule the call for a time that is more convenient for the caregiver or obtain an alternate phone number at which to reach the caregiver.
- request to get in touch with the sampled caregiver if the interviewer reaches a healthcare facility staff member. Inform the healthcare facility staff member that the survey is part of a national initiative sponsored by Medicare. The results of the survey will help hospices understand what they are doing well and what needs improvement.

If the staff member indicates that the caregiver is unable to complete the survey (e.g., due to mental or physical incapacity), the interviewer should thank the staff member and code the attempt appropriately.

Note: Caregivers, if otherwise eligible, residing in healthcare facilities such as an assisted living facility, long-term care facility or nursing home are to be included in the CAHPS Hospice Survey sample frame and attempts to contact the caregiver to administer the survey must be made to those decedents/caregivers drawn into the sample.

Note: Healthcare facility phone numbers cannot be placed on the survey vendor's do-not-call list, even if requested by the healthcare facility staff.

Answering Questions and Probing

Phone interviewers need to probe when a caregiver fails to give a complete or an adequate answer. Interviewers must not ask the caregiver probing questions about their health such as “How are you feeling today?” before asking the CAHPS Hospice Survey questions.

- Interviewer probes must be neutral and must not increase the likelihood of the caregiver providing one answer over another answer. Probes should stimulate the caregiver to give answers that meet the question’s objectives.
- Interviewers must not interpret survey answers for the caregiver
- The interviewer may accept any alternative positive or negative response from the caregiver
 - Interviewers must clarify the caregiver response if accepting alternative positive and/or negative responses (Definitely yes, Probably yes, etc.)
- Types of probes:
 - Repeat the question or the answer categories
 - Interviewer says:
 - “Take a minute to think about it.” REPEAT QUESTION, IF APPROPRIATE
 - “So, would you say that it is...” REPEAT ANSWER CATEGORIES
 - “Which would be closer?” REPEAT ANSWER CATEGORIES THAT ARE CLOSEST TO THE CAREGIVER’S RESPONSE

Conventions on Phone Survey Instruments

- All text that appears in lowercase letters must be read out loud
- Text in UPPERCASE letters must not be read out loud
 - However, YES and NO response options can be read, if appropriate
- Text that is underlined must be emphasized
- Characters in < > must not be read

