



THE CAHPS DATABASE

DATA RELEASE POLICY

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DATA RELEASE POLICY

Introduction

The CAHPS Database is the national repository of data from selected CAHPS surveys. The primary purpose of the Database is to facilitate comparisons of CAHPS survey results by and among survey users. The CAHPS Database also offers an important source of primary data for research related to consumer assessments of quality as measured by CAHPS surveys.

Survey data may be granted to researchers who submit an application and sign a Data Use Agreement (DUA) that ensures the confidentiality of the data. Researchers are invited to submit applications for specific analysis projects to the CAHPS Database Management Committee for review and approval.

Process for Requesting Data Files

Researchers interested in obtaining data from the CAHPS Database must submit:

1. A written proposal (including the contents specified below);
2. A signed Data Use Agreement (available upon request); and
3. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the proposed research project, or a justification of why IRB approval is not needed for the proposed research.¹

All proposals are reviewed by the CAHPS Database Management Committee, in accordance with the criteria outlined below. The review period for data requests (i.e., the time from receipt of request to notification of a decision) is typically 2 to 3 weeks.

Proposal Contents

Proposals should include the following information:

1. Title of the proposed research project.
2. Statement of the problem and the objectives of the proposed research.
3. Specific data files requested (e.g., CAHPS survey version and year) and the specific substantive items that will be used in the analyses (e.g., respondent age, race/ethnicity, etc.);
4. Description of analytic methods.

¹ Westat's IRB has determined that, in general, research activities undertaken with the CAHPS Database are exempt from the requirements of Title 45, Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), because no information identifying individuals is included with the data. This determination does not relieve researchers from obtaining their own human subjects clearance; however, they may cite this determination in their application for IRB review.

5. Key personnel involved, time line for completion, and a description of the relevant experience of the study team.
6. A description of how the data will be stored and protected.

Proposal Review

All requests for access to CAHPS Database data files are reviewed and acted on by the CAHPS Database Management Committee.

The purpose of the proposal review is not to critique the methodology or merits of the proposed project. The primary concern of the CAHPS Database Management Committee is to determine that the proposed research does not compromise the confidentiality of individual survey respondents, survey sponsors, health plans, or provider organizations. In regard to the identity of specific survey sponsors, health plans, or provider organizations, the CAHPS Database Management Committee will observe the following guidelines:

- Access to aggregate data files that do not identify individual survey sponsors, health plans, or provider organizations or permit reidentification may be granted without the specific authorization of the survey sponsors, health plans, or provider organizations whose data are included as part of the aggregate data files. These data files may include variables describing the organization types (e.g., ownership, medical specialties represented, etc.), provided the variables do not permit reidentification.
- Access to data files specific to an identifiable survey sponsor, health plan, or provider organization may be approved only with the express written authorization of the survey sponsor, health plan, or provider organization whose data files are requested. Researcher analyses of the data files provided to researchers under these provisions and containing any identifying information, may not be released, disclosed or made public by the researchers without the express written authorization of any organization that may be identified in the published research analysis.

Conditions for Denying a Proposal

Requests for access to CAHPS Database data files may be denied under any of the following conditions:

1. The proposed research may compromise the privacy or confidentiality of individual respondents.
2. The proposed research may reveal specific survey findings related to individual survey sponsors, health plans, or providers (without their express authorization).
3. The central purpose of the study is not research or evaluation.
4. The research objectives are not feasible using the requested data.
5. The data processing required to produce the requested data files places an unusually heavy burden on CAHPS Database data processing staff. (Note: It

may be possible to respond to a burdensome request if the requestor is able to pay for the effort required.)

If there are concerns about a proposal raised during the review process, the comments of the reviewers will be sent to the requestor. Investigators may make modifications and re-submit the proposal for review. The CAHPS Database Management Committee will also advise the requestor of the same or similar projects that may be underway, to avoid duplication of effort and to encourage collaboration where possible.

Publication Request

Researchers receiving CAHPS Database data are requested to include the following acknowledgment in any publication or presentation using CAHPS Database data:

“The CAHPS® data used in this analysis were provided by the national CAHPS Database. The CAHPS Database is funded by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and administered by Westat under Contract No. HHS290201300003C.”

Researchers are also asked to submit copies of all publications and presentations using CAHPS Database data to the CAHPS Database. The CAHPS Database will issue periodic updates on its website and in other publications regarding the current status of approved research projects. These updates may include contact information for the principal investigator.

Disclaimer

Approval of data access does not constitute endorsement by the CAHPS Database of the proposed research project, study findings, or recommendations of the research team.

Contact Information

Questions regarding the CAHPS Database and this Data Release Policy should be directed to:

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