

Translating CAHPS® Surveys

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Purpose of this Document

This document addresses the need to translate CAHPS surveys from English into a variety of languages in a cost-effective yet culturally competent manner. It combines two sets of guidelines developed for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) CAHPS program by a group of researchers associated with current and previous grantee organizations (RAND, Yale, Harvard, and the American Institutes for Research). These researchers work collaboratively as the CAHPS Cultural Comparability Team. Their guidelines were intended to support AHRQ and the many users of CAHPS surveys in standardizing the translation approach and ensuring the quality of translations obtained.

Read the original reports:

- ***Guidelines for Translating CAHPS Surveys*** (PDF, 61 KB; PDF Help): https://cahps.ahrq.gov/surveys-guidance/helpful-resources/resources/cahpsGuidelines_Translation.html
- ***The Assessment and Selection of Translators and Translation Reviewers*** (PDF, 61 KB; PDF Help): https://cahps.ahrq.gov/surveys-guidance/helpful-resources/resources/CAHPS_Translator_selection_guidelines.rtf

These guidelines are based on a review and analysis of the translation approach that the CAHPS Cultural Comparability Team has used when translating CAHPS surveys into Spanish. This approach involves using two translators to each produce a forward translation and then having the two forward translations reviewed (by a separate bilingual reviewer) against each other and compared to the original English survey. The advantages of the approach advocated in this document (compared to a simple translation/back-translation approach, for example) include:

- Increased ability to identify and resolve translation errors (i.e., errors in syntax, grammar, or meaning).
- Increased ability to identify issues related to variations in terms or expressions used by subgroups of people in the target language.
- Increased ability to produce a translation that uses language that is more easily understood by a wide variety of speakers of the target language.
- Increased ability to identify and resolve problems with the readability level of the translation.

The Team has successfully used the approach recommended in these guidelines to produce Spanish translations of the CAHPS Hospital Survey, the CAHPS In-Center Hemodialysis Survey, the CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey, and various supplemental item sets for these surveys.

Please note: Nearly all CAHPS instruments are available in Spanish. If you need a survey instrument in a language other than English or Spanish, we recommend the process below, which includes:

- Selecting translation team members
- Obtaining forward translations
- Conducting a review of translations
- Reconciling translations
- Sharing your translations with other users

If you cannot find a Spanish translation or if you have any questions or comments about these guidelines, contact the CAHPS User Network at 800-492-9261 or CAHPS1@westat.com.

Translations Available from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which implements several CAHPS surveys nationwide, often translates those surveys into languages other than Spanish. For example, the Medicare Advantage Survey, which includes the CAHPS Health Plan Survey, is also available in Chinese (<http://www.madpcahps.org/Content/SurveyInstruments.aspx>). CMS supplements the English and Spanish versions of the CAHPS Hospital Survey (HCAHPS) with versions in Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Portuguese (<http://hcahpsonline.org/surveyinstrument.aspx>).

Selecting Translation Team Members

Before beginning the process, you will need to select translation team members. Two types of team members are critical to the successful completion of a translation project: translators and translation reviewers. This translation model does not include a specialized technical reviewer as part of the translation and cultural adaptation team. Since CAHPS instruments are geared to the general public, health care-related terms should be familiar to the general public and do not require a special technical review.

The primary role of the *translator* is to translate documents from the source language into the target language. The translator should aim to produce a translation that is:

- Accurate (i.e., the translation preserves the intended meaning of the text in the original language)
- Correct in terms of grammar, syntax, style, and other formal aspects of written language
- Sensitive to regional variations in language use and different dialects of the target language, when present
- Written at the appropriate reading level for the target population

The *translation reviewer* (or *reviewer*, for short) checks the translator's work by comparing the translated version of the document with the original version in the source language. The reviewer's work focuses on both the accuracy of the translation and the correctness and optimal use of language in the translation.

The reviewer also needs to ensure that the translation is appropriate for the target population in terms of the reading level and the language use of groups or subgroups in the target population. The reviewer ensures that the terms and expressions that refer to health care or other special topics are both technically correct and consistently understood by a majority of the people who would be responding to the survey in the target language.

Ideally, several reviewers should work as a team in a review committee. This committee may include the translators, the reviewers, and a member of the research team, who facilitates the discussion and makes final translation decisions. This committee makes decisions by consensus with respect to the quality of the translation and the modifications that should be made in the document. The goal is to produce a reconciled version of the translation that is technically and conceptually equivalent and culturally appropriate.

For more information about selecting translators and recommended qualifications for translators, please refer to Appendix A.

Obtaining Forward Translations

The first stage of the translation process is to obtain forward translations, as outlined in the steps below:

- Obtain the most recent English-language version of the CAHPS survey.
 - Provide two translators and the translation reviewer with background information on the translation task:
 - Mode of survey administration
 - Socio-demographic characteristics of the target population (e.g., whether the sample includes elderly respondents, non-elderly adults, or minors; average educational level or socioeconomic status of the target respondents; country or region of origin)
 - Targeted reading level (Note: A low reading level is preferable.)
 - Region(s) of the country where the survey will be fielded
 - The type of language they should use (“broadcast” or standard language vs. sub-group or region-specific language). Note: Region-specific language may be necessary in particular regions or countries and therefore can be used provided that you maintain equivalence with the English version of the survey.
- Provide the translators and reviewer with a copy of another CAHPS survey translated into the target language, if available. This enables the

translators to check for and continue to use standardized translations for response scales and other text elements that are common across surveys. An example would be translating “medicines” into Spanish as “medicinas” rather than “medicamentos.”

- Obtain two independent forward translations in the target language.

What is “Broadcast Language?”

In order to meet the needs of a broad range of speakers, the CAHPS Consortium generally strives to use “broadcast” or standard language (typically used in broadcast journalism) in both its English versions of surveys as well as in its translations. “Broadcast” or standard language refers to the use of a basic vocabulary, grammar, and syntax that cannot be attributed to a single region/country and is understood by the majority of speakers in the target language.

Conducting a Review of Translations

After successfully obtaining two forward translations, the next step is to conduct a review of the translations, as outlined in the following steps:

- Produce a master table (see Appendix B for sample) that includes:
 - The original English version of the survey, including all instructions and all items
 - Translation 1
 - Translation 2
 - A column for the bilingual reviewer to insert a third version of the translation of each survey item
 - A column for the bilingual reviewer to comment on any issues that should be addressed or considered in revising the translation

Use each row in the table for a single set of instructions or a single survey item with the corresponding response options.

- Provide the bilingual reviewer with the instructions and background information the translators received.
- Have the bilingual reviewer review the master table, indicating which version of the translation should be used for each survey item or producing a reconciled version. The proposed reconciled translation should be entered into the master table.

Reconciling Translations by Committee Consensus

The next stage is to reconcile the reviewed translations through a committee composed of the two translators and a reviewer. Please see the steps below:

- Have the two translators and the reviewer meet as a committee (referred to as the “translation committee”) either in person or by telephone. The committee should review the findings of the bilingual review, discuss any issues or problems identified by the reviewer, and produce a reconciled version of the translations. The choice of final wording should be determined by a consensus of the committee.
- Review the master table by having the bilingual reviewer take the lead in chairing the committee review meetings and keeping track of the agreed-upon changes in the table. The reconciled version from the original review should be modified as needed based on the committee’s decision and entered into the master table.
- Document any concerns that the team cannot resolve. If needed, contact the CAHPS User Network to request additional guidance and to keep AHRQ informed of issues such as the following:
 - Cultural or conceptual differences between the English source document and the translated version that cannot be resolved by modifying the translation (or at least not in a way that doesn’t substantially change the meaning of the original item).
 - Questions about the specific intent of a survey item, word, or phrase.
 - Issues related to the translation of the response options.

After the translation committee has completed their review of the translations and has come to a consensus on final wording for all instructions, items, and response options, produce a final formatted version of the survey.

Sharing Your Translation with Other Users

The CAHPS User Network is compiling translations in order to better support users of the various surveys. If you would like to share your translation, please send a description of the translation process, a copy of the final version of the master table that includes the two forward translations, reviewer comments and suggested changes or edits, and the final reconciled version of the translation, if available. Please note that the CAHPS Consortium will not be validating the survey translations, but the translations will be made available to assist other users on request.

If you have any questions or comments about these guidelines, please contact AHRQ’s CAHPS User Network via e-mail at CAHPS1@westat.com or by phone at 1-800-492-9261.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Selecting Translation Team

Selection Process

The process of selecting translators and reviewers consists of four stages.

- Stage 1. Applicants are asked to submit:
 - A curriculum vitae detailing his/her qualifications, including education, general work experience in the target language, work experience as a translator, and other experience or skills that would enhance his/her translation skills.
 - Contact information for at least two individuals, preferably former clients who the project manager can contact to get a candid evaluation of the individual's work.
 - Work samples and, when appropriate, documents that substantiate stated qualifications.
- Stage 2. Project staff evaluate the applicant's qualifications.
- Stage 3. Project staff interview qualified candidates to evaluate their range of skills, work, and cultural experiences. The purpose of the interview is to identify each candidate's unique set of strengths and weaknesses with respect to the translation project.
- Stage 4. Project staff may ask translators or translation reviewers to complete a short translation or translation review task to determine whether they have the skills needed for the project.

In evaluating translator or reviewer candidates, one should bear in mind that people vary considerably in their linguistic skills. This is particularly important in cases in which those who will select the translators are unfamiliar with the target language.

Required and Desirable Qualifications

Each person brings a unique set of strengths and skills that makes him or her more or less qualified than others for the position of translator or reviewer. In addition, each language into which a CAHPS instrument may be translated poses a unique set of challenges. For example, the supply of competent translators living in the U.S. may vary by language. In addition, some languages display greater variations than others in the way the language is spoken in different regions.

Given this diversity, it is unrealistic to expect that the same set of selection criteria can be applied to every target language under every circumstance. In order to make informed hiring decisions, it is useful to separate the translators' and reviewers' qualifications into two categories, required and desirable.

Table 1 lists the required qualifications for translators and reviewers of CAHPS surveys. Ideally, in order to qualify as a translator or as a translation reviewer, a candidate *should* have each and every one of the qualifications listed. Notice that the set of required qualifications for translators is different from the one for reviewers.

Table 1. Required Qualifications

Required Qualifications for Translators	Required Qualifications for Reviewers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native speaker of the target language • Proficient in reading in the source language • Demonstrated strong writing skills in the target language • Work experience in the target language • Prior professional experience translating and/or developing survey instruments for health services or social sciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native speaker of the target language • Proficient in reading in the source language • Proficient in writing in the source language • Demonstrated strong writing skills in the target language • College degree or higher • Prior work experience in the health services area or participation in health services or social

Appendix B: Sample Master Table

#	English	Spanish Translation 1	Spanish Translation 2	Reconciled Version	Comments
1.	In the last 3 months, did you try to get information or help from your prescription drug plan's customer service?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿trató de obtener información o ayuda de atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas recetadas?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿trató de obtener información o ayuda de parte del servicio de atención al cliente de su plan de medicamentos recetados?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿trató de obtener información o ayuda del servicio de atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas recetadas?	Use “medicinas” instead of “medicamentos”. Easier to understand.
2.	Since you joined your drug plan, how often did your drug plan's customer service give you the information or help you needed?	Desde que se afilió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas le dio la información o ayuda que necesitaba?	Desde que se afilió a su plan de medicamentos, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan le dio la información o la ayuda que usted necesitaba?	Desde que se inscribió en su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan le dio la información o ayuda que necesitaba?	Check with English team re: use of word “your”.
3.	Since you joined your drug plan, how often did your drug plan's customer service treat you with courtesy and respect?	Desde de se afilió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas le trató con cortesía y respeto?	Desde que se afilió al plan de medicamentos, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan lo trató con cortesía y respeto?	Desde que se inscribió en su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente de su plan le trató con cortesía y respeto?	Use “inscribió” instead of “afilió”. More commonly used term, easier to understand.

#	English	Spanish Translation 1	Spanish Translation 2	Reconciled Version	Comments
4.	In the last 3 months, did you look for information from your drug plan about which prescription medicines were covered?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿pidió a su plan de medicinas información sobre cuáles medicinas recetadas estaban cubiertas?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿buscó en su plan de medicamentos información sobre los medicamentos de venta con receta que estaban incluidos?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿buscó en su plan de medicinas información sobre las medicinas recetadas que estaban cubiertas?	Use “cubiertas” instead of incluidas. In cog testing, probe for meaning of “cubiertas” & if easier to understand than incluidas.