

**APPENDIX I. VENDOR MATERIALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONSUMER ASSESSMENT OF
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND SYSTEMS HOME AND
COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES (HCBS CAHPS®) SURVEY**

APPENDIX I-1. SAMPLE OF MINIMUM BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Sample of Minimum Business Recommendations

The first part of this document presents an example of the minimum business recommendations to consider for survey vendors to administer the HCBS CAHPS Survey. Sample recommendations are included for relevant survey experience, organizational survey capacity, and quality control procedures. Separate tables containing criteria and corresponding recommendations are presented for each of these three competencies.

At this time, there is no recommendation by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for programs or states to conduct the HCBS CAHPS Survey, and as a result, there are no standardized recommendations, trainings, or approved survey vendors. It is advised that vendors who administer the HCBS CAHPS Survey be familiar with the instrument structure, content, and intent and be knowledgeable about the unique features of the instrument and implications for how it is administered.

Relevant Survey Experience

Relevant survey experience refers to demonstrated recent experience in fielding participant experience surveys, as shown in Table I1 below.

Table I1. Criteria and Survey Experience Recommendations

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
Number of years in business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 3 years
Organizational survey experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years of prior experience administering standardized experience of care surveys as an organization within the most recent 3-year period; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience administering surveys to individuals with various types of disabilities, such as people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or mental health or substance use disorder; • Prior experience administering experience of care surveys for vulnerable populations; • Prior experience employing a statistical sampling process within the 2 most recent years; and • The following activities are not considered relevant experience: experience with public opinion or political surveys; qualitative data collection; surveys that did not use statistical sampling methods; and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) surveys.
Number of years conducting surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years of prior experience within the most recent 3-year period conducting experience of care survey projects using the modes that the sponsor requires (in-person and/or telephone)
Experience with multiple survey languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior experience administering in-person and telephone surveys in languages as determined by the sponsor; and • Survey vendors should also have access to experienced translators for respondents who do not speak language(s) in which the survey will be administered.

Organizational Survey Capacity

Organizational survey capacity refers to capacity to conduct standardized in-person and/or telephone interviewing in a specified time frame, as shown in Table I2 below.

Table I2. Criteria and Organizational Survey Capacity Recommendations

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
Capacity to handle estimated workload	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess sufficient physical and personnel resources to administer telephone and/or in-person interviews using an electronic interviewing system; and • Conduct all HCBS CAHPS Survey-related activities within the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska, or U.S. territories. This recommendation applies to all staff and subcontractors.
Personnel	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate a Project Manager directly employed by the survey vendor (i.e., not a subcontractor) to oversee all survey operations. The Project Manager should have at least 2 years of experience in overseeing all functional aspects of survey operations including in-person and telephone interviews, data file preparation, and data security. This position should have a strong background in survey research and methodology and previous experience using mixed mode administration; • Designate an In-Person Supervisor who has previous experience managing small- to medium-scale (200 to 50,000) in-person survey projects, if sponsor supports the in-person survey; • Designate a Telephone Survey Supervisor who has previous experience managing small- to medium-scale telephone interviewing projects, if sponsor supports the telephone survey; • Designate a Sampling Manager who should be directly employed by the survey vendor (i.e., not a subcontractor) and have previous experience in sample frame development and sample selection experience; • Designate an Information System staff responsible for data submission (programmer) who should be directly employed by the survey vendor (i.e., not a subcontractor) and have previous experience preparing and submitting data files in a specified format; and • Employ appropriate organizational back-up staff for coverage of key staff, in terms of sufficiency and experience.

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
System resources	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct all HCBS CAHPS Survey-related work, including telephone survey administration activities, at the survey vendor's or approved subcontractor's official business location. Home-based places of work (e.g., residences) and virtual organizations will not be considered. Exceptions may be made for home-based places of work during public health emergencies; • Reproduce and mail pre-notification letters at the survey vendor's or designated subcontractor's official business location; • Program electronic in-person and telephone interview systems in accordance with specifications provided; • Conduct telephone interviews using an electronic telephone interviewing system at the survey vendor's or designated subcontractor's official business location (if sponsor chooses to use phone survey mode); • Conduct in-person interviews using an electronic interviewing system at the participant's or proxy's home or other designated location (if sponsor chooses to use in-person survey mode); • Have ability to handle concurrent survey projects while maintaining high-quality survey data and response rates; • Track surveys electronically through an electronic survey management system at each stage of the protocol using a random, unique de-identified participant identification number and interim disposition codes. This electronic management system should prevent duplicative records; • Provide regular progress reports to sponsor regarding the survey progress, number of completes, and disposition codes and numbers for non-complete; • Maintain a secure work environment for receiving, processing, and storing electronic versions of questionnaires and sample files that protects the confidentiality of survey response data and personally identifiable information in accordance with federal and state law governing use and handling of personally identifiable health information; and • Prepare, accommodate, and plan for onsite visits from the sponsor for training and quality oversight purposes.

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
Mode administration	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate ability to complete pre-notification process, including large-scale printing, assembling, and mailing letters to survey sample; • Demonstrate ability to program electronic telephone and in-person interviewing systems; • Comply with all quality oversight recommendations. This includes the submission of sample pre-notification letter materials, sample telephone script, in-person scripts, and interviewer screen shots to the sponsor for review and approval prior to survey administration; • Demonstrate ability to collect and accurately process survey data through all phases of survey administration; • Demonstrate ability to follow the survey administration timeline; • Use commercial software/resources to ensure that addresses and telephone numbers are updated and correct for all sampled participants; • Demonstrate capability to administer the survey in additional languages determined by the sponsor; • Demonstrate capability to access certified translators if needed; • Assign appropriate disposition codes to each sampled participant indicating final survey status; and • Do not conduct telephone interviews from a residence, with exceptions for public health emergencies at the discretion of the sponsor.
Sampling experience	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess experience in the last 2 years selecting sample based on specific eligibility criteria; • Demonstrate ability to document and implement a statistical approach to drawing a sample; • Demonstrate ability to work with sponsor to electronically obtain sample frame(s) for sampling within specified time frame; and • Conduct quality checks on sample frame file(s) received from the sponsor to verify accuracy and completeness of sample frame information.
Data submission	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all data preparation and submission rules as specified in <i>Technical Assistance Guide for Administration of the CAHPS Home and Community-Based Services Survey, Section X: Final Data File</i>, including verifying that data are de-identified and contain no duplicate cases; • Submit data electronically in the format specified by the sponsor; files may be provided as a flat, ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Exchange) fixed-width file, CSV (comma-separated values), or Microsoft® Excel file. Survey sponsors and vendors should work together to determine the preferred and most feasible format in advance; • Work with the survey sponsor to submit the data to the HCBS CAHPS Database in ASCII/flat format; and • Work with the sponsor to resolve data and data file submission problems.

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
Data security	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain established electronic security procedures related to access levels, passwords, and firewalls as required by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and any applicable state laws; • Perform daily data back-up and offsite redundancy procedures that adequately safeguard system data; • Use encryption protocols to transmit data files; • Implement established procedures for identifying and reporting breaches of confidential data; and • Prepare and submit data via secure methods (HIPAA compliant).
Confidentiality	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute business associate agreement with the sponsor; • Store data files securely and confidentially in accordance with specified recommendations; • Ensure confidentiality of data for sampled participant’s personally identifiable information (PII) during each phase of the survey process; • Obtain signed confidentiality agreements from staff and subcontractors; and • Ensure compliance with all applicable HIPAA Security and Privacy Rules, protected health information (PHI), and PII protocols in conducting all survey administration and data collection activities.
Technical assistance and customer support	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish toll-free customer support telephone lines with live operators during sponsor’s required business hours to accommodate inquiries in language specified by the state and sponsor, starting at the beginning of the survey fielding period and continuing through the duration of HCBS CAHPS Survey fielding.

Quality Control Procedures

Quality control procedures refers to personnel training and quality control mechanisms employed to collect valid, reliable survey data, as shown in Table I3.

Table I3. Criteria and Quality Control Recommendations

Criteria	Survey Vendor Recommendations
Demonstrated quality control procedures	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and document quality control procedures for all phases of survey implementation, as specified in the <i>Technical Assistance Guide for Administration of the HCBS CAHPS Survey, Section III.C: Survey Vendor Roles and Responsibilities</i>: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal staff training; 2. In-person administration of surveys (electronic in-person interviewing system); 3. Telephone administration of surveys (electronic telephone interviewing system); 4. Adequate monitoring of subcontractor(s), if applicable; 5. Scanning and coding of survey data; 6. Preparing final data files for submission; and 7. All other functions and processes that affect the administration of the HCBS CAHPS Survey; and • Develop and submit annually a Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) for survey administration in accordance with the <i>Technical Assistance Guide for Administration of the CAHPS Home and Community-Based Services Survey, Section III.C: Survey Vendor Roles and Responsibilities</i>; and • Physical business premises on which major operations of survey business are conducted and are amenable to onsite visits by the sponsor as specified in the <i>Technical Assistance Guide for Administration of the CAHPS Home and Community-Based Services Survey, Section III: Roles and Responsibilities</i>.
Training recommendations	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish in-house training of staff involved in all aspects of survey administration, using the interviewer guidelines for administering the HCBS CAHPS Survey (see Appendix A)
Training participants	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all interviewers, the Project Manager, Sampling Manager, In-Person Survey Supervisor, and Telephone Survey Supervisor at a minimum; and • Strongly recommend that all survey vendor staff responsible for data coding and file preparation attend training.
Use of HCBS CAHPS Survey	<p>Survey vendors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use HCBS CAHPS Survey without modifications or changes beyond CAHPS recommendations.

**APPENDIX I-2. SAMPLE OF SURVEY VENDOR QUALITY
ASSURANCE PLAN**

Model Survey Vendor Quality Assurance Plan

Sponsors are encouraged to require HCBS CAHPS Survey vendors to develop and submit a Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) for sponsor approval. A survey vendor's QAP is a comprehensive working document that details its implementation of and compliance with all required HCBS CAHPS Survey protocols.

The purpose of this model QAP is to inform the structure of a survey vendor's QAP so that all required items are addressed in the appropriate sequence for review and approval by the sponsor. After reviewing the submitted QAP, the sponsor may provide feedback about the survey vendor's QAP, if necessary. If revisions are needed, the survey vendor should resubmit a revised version of the QAP to the sponsor for approval.

Organizational Background, Structure, and Staff Experience

In this section of the QAP, the vendor will provide the following information:

1. Survey vendor organizational information:

- a. Organization name;
- b. Mailing address;
- c. Physical address, if different from mailing address;
- d. Telephone number;
- e. Website address; and
- f. Name of key contact person, direct telephone number, and e-mail address;

If the organization has multiple locations, include the address of both the main location and the address of the locations at which the primary survey operations, including sampling, data collection, and data processing activities, are conducted.

2. An organizational chart identifying the names and titles of staff members, including subcontractors (if applicable), responsible for each of the following tasks:

- a. Overall project management, including tracking and supervision of all tasks;
- b. Sampling procedures, including obtaining and verifying the sample frame, selecting the sample, and assigning a unique identification number to each sampled participant;
- c. Data collection procedures, including overseeing the implementation of the in-person and/or telephone data collection protocols;
- d. Data receipt and data entry/scanning procedures;
- e. File development and data submission processes;
- f. Tracking key survey events;
- g. Survey administration process quality checks and control activities;
- h. Confidentiality and data security; and
- i. Staff training;

The organizational chart should clearly specify all staff reporting relationships, including those staff responsible for managing subcontractors. The chart should also designate any individuals with quality assurance oversight responsibilities and indicate the tasks for which they are responsible; and

3. A narrative description of the training that will be conducted or has been conducted by personnel involved in HCBS CAHPS Survey administration, including subcontractor(s), if applicable. Individually discuss training for:
 - a. Telephone interviewers;
 - b. In-person interviewers; and
 - c. Customer support personnel.

Work Plan for the HCBS CAHPS Survey Administration

For the following HCBS CAHPS Survey administration tasks, the survey vendor will identify the processes implemented to conduct each task; the system resources (hardware and software) utilized; and the quality control activities performed, including the documentation maintained as evidence that the quality checks were conducted.

This section will provide an overview of the work plan, including critical milestones and related timelines, including information on all of the following:

1. Information technology (IT) and system resources being used to administer the HCBS CAHPS Survey. This includes a description of all relevant hardware and software. For example, describe the computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system and Survey Management System used for the HCBS CAHPS Survey;
2. Implementation plan for the HCBS CAHPS Survey for the in-person and/or telephone survey modes. This section of the QAP should describe the entire process the organization follows for these tasks:
 - a. Fielding the survey;
 - b. With input from the sponsor, handling abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
 - c. With input from the sponsor, managing complaints about HCBS programs;
 - d. Processing the data;
 - e. Ensuring data quality through the use of quality control and assurance procedures during each stage of the protocol (in-person, telephone);
 - f. Monitoring and tracking sampled participants through the protocol (in-person, telephone) using an electronic Survey Management System; and
 - g. Preparing and submitting final data files;

3. Sponsor/vendor's schedule and timeline to conduct all activities within the timeframes specified in the HCBS CAHPS Survey protocols. The timeline should describe when each milestone activity will be completed (e.g., X weeks after sample selection, or Y weeks after calling the first respondent);
4. Plan for obtaining the sample frame, detailing critical steps in the process and the quality assurance checks conducted on the sample frame file. Description of how the survey sponsor and/or vendor selects sample and the quality control process for sample selection;
5. Plan for in-person interview protocols and procedures:
 - a. Obtaining and updating telephone numbers and addresses and programming the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) system and software used;
 - b. With input from the sponsor, obtaining and updating guardian (e.g., legal representative, legal guardian) and service information;
 - c. Tests and quality control checks of CAPI procedures to confirm that programming is accurate and in accordance with HCBS CAHPS Survey protocols, and that data integrity is maintained;
 - d. Conducting in-person interviews;
 - e. Capturing participant survey responses obtained during in-person interviewing;
 - f. Verifying that in-person interviewers are following HCBS CAHPS Survey data collection protocols and procedures during the in-person survey administration;
 - g. Quality control process for monitoring subcontractors, if applicable;
 - h. Leaving voicemail messages on sampled participants' answering machines. Include voicemail message script, if applicable; and
 - i. Survey languages implemented for the in-person survey and the process used for foreign language in-person survey administration;
6. Plan for telephone protocol and procedures:
 - a. Obtaining and updating telephone numbers and programming the CATI system and software used;
 - b. With input from the sponsor, obtaining and updating guardian and service information;
 - c. Tests and quality control checks of CATI procedures to confirm that programming is accurate and in accordance with HCBS CAHPS Survey protocols, and that data integrity is maintained;
 - d. Conducting telephone interviews;
 - e. Capturing participant survey responses obtained during telephone interviewing;
 - f. Verifying that telephone interviewers are following HCBS CAHPS Survey data collection protocols and procedures for the telephone survey administration. Note: Survey vendors describe telephone interview monitoring procedures in detail and denote the percentage of interviews monitored by each monitoring method (e.g., live, recorded, callbacks);

- g. Quality control process for monitoring subcontractors, if applicable;
 - h. Leaving voicemail messages on sampled participant's answering machines. Include voicemail message script, if applicable; and
 - i. Survey languages implemented for telephone administration and the process used for foreign language telephone survey administration;
7. Data receipt activities, including monitoring and tracking surveys if the participant transitions from the phone to in-person survey modes or vice versa or from a participant to a proxy;
8. Data preparation and submission procedures for each of the following:
 - a. Application of survey disposition codes, whether developed by American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)¹ or internally developed;
 - b. Uploading data files; and
 - c. Quality control processes used to validate the accuracy of data file preparation and submission;
9. Customer support operations using a toll-free telephone line and e-mail address:
 - a. Identify staff responsible for responding to questions regarding the HCBS CAHPS Survey;
 - b. Provide the customer support telephone number and e-mail address;
 - c. Include the hours of live operations for the customer support line and the timeframe for returning calls and responding to e-mails;
 - d. Detail the process to include English and non-English-speaking participants; and
 - e. Include a written transcript of the customer support telephone line voicemail message; and
10. In the appendices to the QAP, the survey vendor will include all forms used in HCBS CAHPS Survey administration that may assist the sponsor in reviewing the survey vendor's processes (e.g., tracking logs, quality assurance checklists, survey status flags, and/or productivity reports). Note: These items should be templates only and should not contain any personally identifiable information (PII).

¹ ESOMAR. AAPOR Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. 2016. <https://www.esomar.org/what-we-do/code-guidelines/AAPOR-Standard-Definitions-Final-Dispositions-of-Case-Codes-and-Outcome-Rates-for-Surveys>

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Data Security Procedures

Survey vendors should comply with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) recommendations and other federal and state laws protecting the privacy and security of PII and protected health information (PHI). HIPAA provides individuals with important privacy rights and protections with respect to their health information. In this section, the survey vendors will specify how they will protect the confidentiality, privacy, and security of information.

1. Physical and electronic security of and the storage procedures for files containing PII and survey data in hard copy and electronic form, including the following:
 - a. Back-up process for survey administration activities related to electronic data or files;
 - b. Quality control activities in place to verify that back-up files are retrievable; and
 - c. Data retention policy and storage facility, including length of time materials will be retained and the name of the storage facility used (e.g., if materials are stored off site);
2. Measures used to protect respondent privacy;
3. Secure method used to transmit sampled participant PII to a subcontractor, if necessary;
4. Confidentiality agreement template signed by staff and subcontractors, if applicable, who are involved in any aspect of HCBS CAHPS Survey administration;
5. Plan and protocols for reporting any incidents to the sponsor; and
6. A written contract between a covered entity and a business associate covering the following:
 - a. Permitted and required uses and disclosures of PHI by the survey vendor;
 - b. Usage or further disclosure of the information other than as permitted or required by the contract or as required by law;
 - c. Implementation of appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorized use or disclosure of the information, including implementation recommendations of the HIPAA Security Rule with regard to electronic PHI;
 - d. Methods to report to the sponsor any use or disclosure of the information not provided for by its contract, including incidents that constitute breaches of unsecured PHI;
 - e. Disclosure method of PHI as specified in its contract to satisfy a sponsor's obligation with respect to individuals' requests for copies of their PHI;
 - f. To the extent the survey vendor is to carry out a sponsor's obligation under the Privacy Rule, information on compliance with the recommendations applicable to the obligation;
 - g. Availability of the survey vendor's internal practices, books, and records relating to the use and disclosure of PHI received or created;
 - h. At termination of the contract, if feasible, return or destroy all PHI received or created by the survey vendor on behalf of the sponsor;
 - i. If subcontractors are used by the survey vendor, those subcontractors agree to the same restrictions and conditions that apply to the business associate with respect to such information; and

- j. Termination of the contract by the sponsor if the survey vendor violates a material term of the contract. Contracts between survey vendor and subcontractors are subject to these same recommendations.