

Tool 21. Obtain patient feedback

Patients are in the best position to judge if a medical office poses health literacy challenges. Patients interact with a variety of office staff and clinicians while they:

- Fill out forms.
- Discuss health concerns with clinicians.
- Undergo diagnostic tests and treatment procedures.
- Receive medication and self-care instructions.

Each step presents a risk for misunderstanding and confusion. Frequently, practices are unaware of the level of difficulty patients encounter in completing routine forms and navigating the health care system. Obtaining patient feedback allows patients to play an active role in identifying areas of improvement for health literacy.

Survey: [CAHPS® Clinician & Group Survey](#)—Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy.

The CAHPS® Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy consists of 29 items that aim to assess the performance of practices regarding health literacy issues. These items are a supplement to the CAHPS® Clinician & Group Survey (24 items). It is available in both English and Spanish. If you already have a patient survey, you may add CAHPS® items to your existing survey.

CAHPS® health literacy survey items: are on pages 8-14 of the survey; the core set of questions is on pages 1-5. These items ask patients to choose 1 of 4 responses to questions; Always, Usually, Sometimes, Never. You can also go to CAHPS® Survey and Reporting Kits for a version of items that includes 6 possible responses.

- Methods of administration: Because patients with limited literacy are unlikely to respond to a mail survey, we suggest that you administer the survey by phone or have a phone follow-up to a mail survey. We have also included a Sample Cover Letter that can be mailed to patients with the survey.
- Analyze the results. After collecting the completed questionnaires, have a member of your health literacy team examine the results and identify which items received the lowest scores.
- Identify improvement strategies. Have the health literacy team prioritize which health literacy practice weaknesses to address first. Identify and implement health literacy tools that can address these areas. For more information see the About the CAHPS® Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy.