

PCF PECS Communication Guidelines

Primary Care First reflects a regionally-based, multi-payer approach to care delivery and payment. Primary Care First fosters practitioner independence by increasing flexibility for primary care, providing participating practitioners with the freedom to innovate their care delivery approach based on their unique patient population and resources. Primary Care First rewards participants with additional revenue for taking on limited risk based on easily understood, actionable outcomes.

Purpose of the PCF PECS Survey

In Primary Care First, CMS will use a focused set of clinical quality and patient experience measures to assess quality of care delivered at the practice site. A Primary Care First practice site must meet standards that reflect quality care in order to be eligible for a positive performance-based adjustment to their primary care revenue. These measures were selected to be actionable, clinically meaningful, and aligned with CMS's broader quality measurement strategy.

One of practice sites' requirements as a PCF participant is an annual Patient Experience of Care Survey (PECS). CMS scores practice sites' performance on the PECS and benchmarks it against scores of all Model participants. The PECS score each year impacts practice sites' quality score and financial recoupment for that performance year.

The PCF PECS instrument is the CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey version 3.0 (known as CG-CAHPS 3.0) with additional PCF-specific questions. Some questions are about experience in the last 6 months with the practice site in general, and other questions are about experience in the last 6 months with the primary care provider the patient saw most often at this practice site. In addition to the CG-CAHPS questions, PCF PECS's additional questions measure the extent to which patients experienced the practice site and provider demonstrating other desirable behaviors. These behaviors are called care delivery functions and they are important to PCF because they help achieve PCF Model goals such as improving patient health, raising patient engagement, and reducing unnecessary spending.

Use of the PCF PEC Survey with Other Surveys

Some practice sites may wish to conduct other patient experience of care or satisfaction surveys to support internal quality improvement activities. A formal survey, regardless of the data collection mode employed, is one in which the primary goal is to ask standardized questions of the practice site's patient population. In contrast, contacting patients to assess their care at any time or calling a patient to check on services received are both considered to be routine patient contacts, not surveys.

To avoid imposing on patients, CMS strongly encourages practice sites to refrain from conducting other patient surveys from 4 weeks prior to and during the period when the PCF PECS is actively surveying. CMS-sponsored surveys are exempt from this guidance.

Communicate with Patients About the Survey in Accordance with CMS Specifications

Practice sites should be well-informed about the survey, communicate their support of it, and answer patient questions about the survey with confidence. These are key tools for attaining good response rates.

Practice sites must adhere to the following specifications:

- **Hang the poster.** A CMS-developed poster will be provided to practices. Practice sites must download the poster and hang at least one poster in a well-visible area of their practice site beginning 6 months before the survey's first mailout.
- **Print Waiting Room FAQs.** CMS-developed Waiting Room FAQs will be given (in electronic format) to all vendors and posted on PCF Connect. Practice sites must print these and keep them in their waiting rooms beginning 6 months before the survey begins. They can be removed after the survey ends.
- **Become familiar with Waiting Room FAQs.** It is common for patients who are contacted by the survey to seek assurance from their providers that the survey is legitimate. Therefore, practice site staff should be aware of the survey basics so they can respond to questions with confidence.
- **Respond to patient questions and comment about the survey.** If a patient talks to practice staff about the survey, practice staff should adhere to the following rules regarding statements for patients:

The following are appropriate:

- Answering any question according to the response given in the Waiting Room FAQs.
- Telling patients that they may be asked to participate in the Patient Experience of Care survey from your practice site.
- Telling patients that the survey is legitimate.
- Telling patients that their response, while voluntary, is valued and paid attention to.
- Most importantly, express your support of the survey with statements such as, "We are supportive of the survey and want to hear feedback from our patients" or "We think the survey is important."

Appropriate answers with respect to assuring patients of confidentiality:

- This survey is public health research. HIPAA allows the release of patient contact information for the purpose of public health research.
- This practice site has no way of knowing who responded to the survey. Patients' answers on the survey, whether negative or positive, are valued.
- Their survey responses will never be reported with their name or other identifying information.
- All respondents' survey responses will be reported in aggregate.
- They can skip or refuse to answer any question they do not feel comfortable with.
- Their participation in the study will not affect their care at this practice site or Medicare benefits that they currently receive or expect to receive in the future.

Practice sites must take care not to influence patients' answers on the survey. Therefore, practice site staff **may not** do any of the following:

- Provide a copy of the PCF PECS questionnaire or survey materials to their patients.
- Attempt to determine which patients were sampled. Vendors are strictly prohibited from sharing this information with practice sites both before and after the survey administration.
- Ask their patients if they would like to be included in the survey.

- Tell patients that the practice site or provider hopes or expects their patients will give them the best or highest rating.
- Imply that the practice site, its personnel or its agents will be rewarded or gain benefits for positive feedback.
- Offer incentives of any kind to patients for participating (or not) in the PCF PECS.
- Include any messages or materials promoting the practice site in PCF PECS materials, including mail survey cover letters, questionnaires, and telephone interview scripts.
- Use the PCF PECS to identify or ask about other patients who are looking for a primary care practice site
- Translate the survey into the patient's language. (A translation provided by the patient's family member or friend is appropriate.)