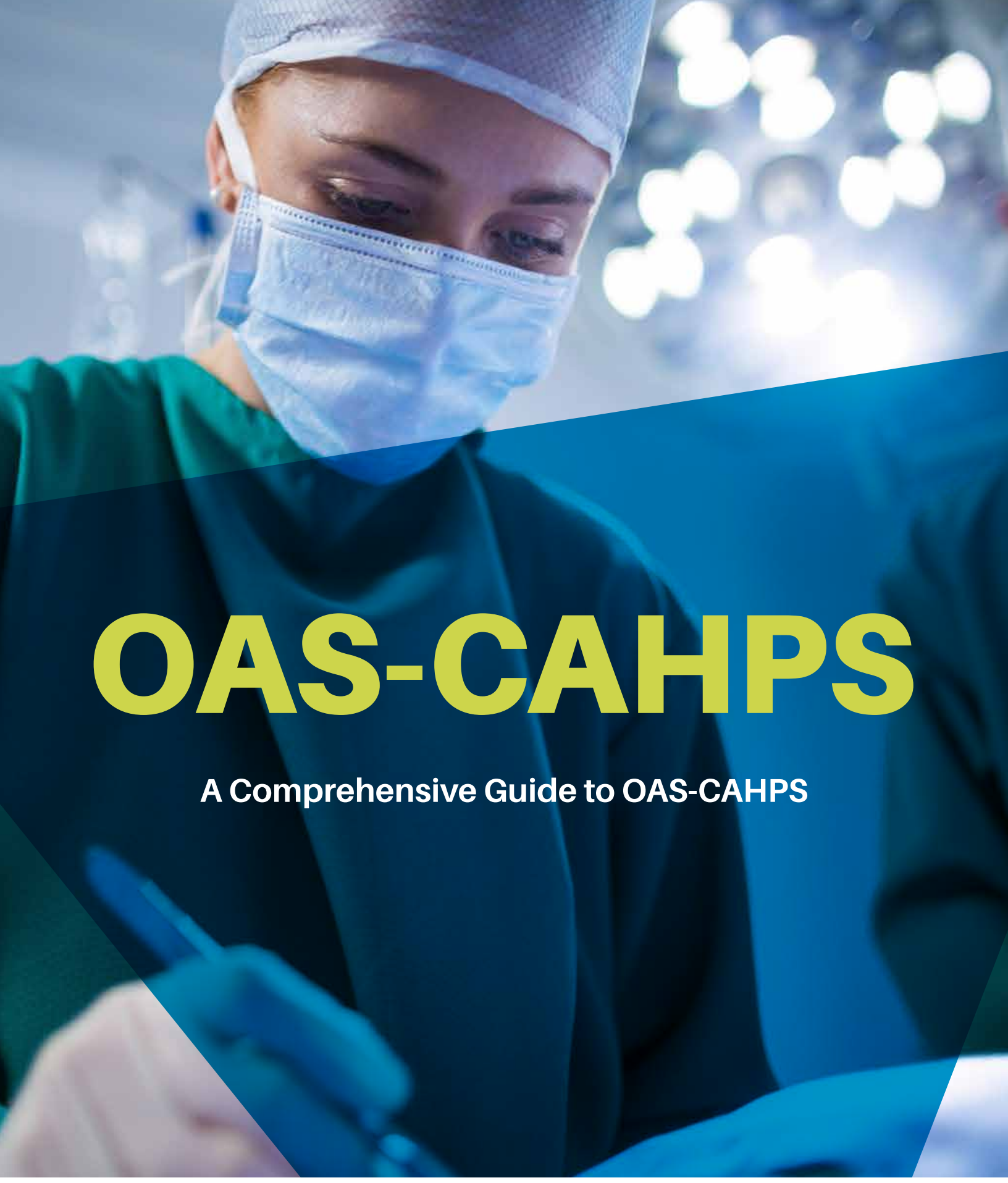

OAS-CAHPS

A Comprehensive Guide to OAS-CAHPS

Always Culture

What are the 34 Questions on the OAS-CAHPS Survey?

SCREENING QUESTIONS

- Before your procedure, did your doctor or anyone from the facility tell you that you would be able to go home on the same day as your procedure?
- Did you have a procedure at the facility listed on the cover letter?

BEFORE YOUR PROCEDURE

- Did the check-in process run smoothly?
- Was the facility clean?
- Was the facility organized?

FACILITIES AND STAFF

- Did the reception staff treat you with courtesy and respect?
- Did the nursing staff treat you with courtesy and respect?
- Did the nursing staff listen carefully to you?
- Did the doctors/surgeons treat you with courtesy and respect?
- Did the doctors/surgeons listen carefully to you?
- Did the staff make sure you were comfortable during your wait?

COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

- Did the staff explain the procedure in a way you could understand?
- Before giving you any new medicine, did the staff tell you what the medicine was for?
- Before giving you any new medicine, did the staff describe possible side effects in a way you could understand?
- Did doctors/nurses explain what to expect during recovery?
- Did you receive information about what to do if you had pain or nausea?
- Did you receive information about what to do if you had bleeding or signs of infection?

PREPARATION FOR DISCHARGE & RECOVERY

- Did the staff review discharge instructions with you?
- Did you receive written information about symptoms or health problems to look out for after you left?
- Did someone verify you had a responsible adult to drive you home?

OVERALL RATING

- Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst hospital possible and 10 is the best hospital possible, what number would you use to rate this hospital during your stay?
- Would you recommend this hospital to your friends and family?

ABOUT YOU

- In general, how would you rate your overall health?
- In general, how would you rate your overall mental or emotional health?
- Do you have a regular doctor (or primary care physician)?
- What year were you born?
- Are you male or female?
- What is the highest grade or level of school that you have completed?
- Do you speak a language other than English at home?
- Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
- What is your race? (Select one or more)
- Did someone help you complete this survey?
- (If yes) How did that person help you?
- (If yes) How are you related to the person who helped you?

WHAT DOES THE OAS-CAHPS SURVEY LOOK FOR?

Similar to HCAHPS, the OAS-CAHPS survey groups questions into specific "Domains" or "Composites." Improving your scores requires focusing on these specific areas:

Facilities and Staff: This measures cleanliness, comfort, and the courtesy/respect shown by all staff members (not just clinicians).
Communication About Your Procedure: This measures how well the team explained the process, risks, and expected outcomes before and after the surgery.
Preparation for Discharge and Recovery: Since patients go home the same day, this is a critical domain. It measures whether the patient feels safe and informed about

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WHAT IS THE OAS-CAHPS SURVEY?

OAS-CAHPS stands for the Outpatient and Ambulatory Surgery Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems.

It is a standardized survey developed by CMS to measure the patient experience of care in Medicare-certified Hospital Outpatient Departments (HOPDs) and freestanding Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASCs).

Unlike the inpatient environment, where patients stay overnight, the OAS-CAHPS survey is specifically designed to capture the nuances of same-day surgery—where efficiency, cleanliness, and clear discharge instructions are paramount to the patient's perception of safety.

WHY IS OAS-CAHPS IMPORTANT

OAS-CAHPS is no longer just “nice to know”—it is a critical business metric.

Financial Impact (ASCQR / OQR Programs): Participation in OAS-CAHPS is linked to the Ambulatory Surgical Center Quality Reporting (ASCQR) Program and the Hospital Outpatient Quality Reporting (OQR) Program. Failure to report these measures can result in a reduction of annual payment updates from Medicare.

Public Transparency: Results are publicly reported on the CMS "Care Compare" website, allowing patients to choose surgery centers based on star ratings and patient reviews.

Patient Safety & Loyalty: In the outpatient world, patients have choices. High scores drive referrals, while low scores regarding communication or cleanliness can damage a facility's reputation in the community.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE THE SURVEY?

Not every patient who walks through the doors will be surveyed. To be eligible, a patient must meet the following criteria:

Age: Must be 18 years or older at the time of the surgery/procedure.
Procedure Type: Must have had an outpatient surgery or procedure (defined by specific CPT codes) in an HOPD or ASC.
Insurance: Unlike HCAHPS which is often associated heavily with Medicare, OAS-CAHPS protocols require facilities to survey a random sample of patients regardless of payer mix (Medicare, Medicaid, Private Insurance), though CMS reporting requirements focus on specific patient populations.
Mental Status: Must be capable of completing the survey (or have a proxy).

WHEN AND HOW IS THE SURVEY ADMINISTERED?

The survey is administered shortly after the patient returns home to ensure the memory of the experience is fresh.

Timing: Generally initiated within 48 hours to a few weeks post-discharge.

Modes:
- Mail Only
- Telephone Only
- Mixed Mode (Mail with Telephone follow-up)
- Web-based modes (increasingly common in modern administration).

Note: Facilities cannot administer the sur+ vey themselves; they must use a CMS-ap+ proved third-party vendor to ensure data integrity.

WHAT CAN ASCs AND HOPDs DO TO IMPROVE SCORES?

Detailed clinical workflows are essential, but OAS-CAHPS scores are driven by behavior and communication. Because the patient interaction time is shorter than in a hospital stay, every interaction counts.

3 Strategies to Improve OAS-CAHPS Performance:

- Master the "Warm Hand-Off": Verify that the patient understands what is happening at every transition. From the front desk to the pre-op bay, and from the PACU to the car—staff should introduce themselves and explain the "next step" clearly.
- Obsess Over Discharge Clarity: The "Preparation for Discharge" domain is often where facilities struggle. Do not just hand the patient a stack of papers. Sit down (eye-level), explain the signs of complications (e.g., "If you feel X, call us immediately"), and verify understanding.
- Validate Comfort & Cleanliness: Patients equate cleanliness with safety. Ensure waiting areas are immaculate. Furthermore, frequently ask about physical comfort (temperature, positioning, pain) before the patient has to ask. This impacts the "Facilities and Staff" domain heavily.

Learn more

Coming Soon from Always Culture

We are expanding our proven, behavior-based training methodology to the ambulatory setting. Our upcoming OAS-CAHPS Training Series will equip your ASC or HOPD staff with specific, short-format video modules designed to improve communication, clarity, and compassion in the fast-paced outpatient environment.

Learn more at AlwaysCulture.com

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OAS-CAHPS questions and domains evolve over time. For the most current survey instruments and guidance, visit the official CMS website.