



HOS Coalition Statement

To Identify Opportunities by which HOS May Better Reflect Diverse Populations

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Coalition Members: American Association of Health and Disability
Association for Community Affiliated Plans
Better Medicare Alliance
Community Catalyst
Long Term Quality Alliance
Special Needs Plan Alliance

Statement and Recommendations: The Medicare Health Outcomes Survey (HOS) is a self-report survey used to generate the Physical Composite (PCS) and Mental Health Composite (MCS) items in the HEDIS data set and in Stars (used to rate Medicare Advantage health plans). As of 2012, additional quality bonus payments were made available to plans with 4 or more stars. The goal of HOS is to gather *valid, reliable and clinical meaningful* data for many purposes, including quality improvement and enhancing consumer choice.

While widely used and researched, the Medicare HOS was originally developed using a veteran population of primarily older white males. To date, the survey has not been validated in diverse populations including those for whom English is not their primary language, those with low health literacy, those with chronic or progressive physical or intellectual disabilities, and those with housing insecurity or other reasons for limited options for communication. Furthermore, the HOS is currently available in just three languages (English, Spanish and Mandarin). When sub-populations are not adequately represented and/or survey questions do not reflect the experiences of the individuals being surveyed, the risk is that resultant data and assumptions or conclusions from that data may be skewed.

While the Coalition has numerous ideas for ways to change and improve the HOS, it recognizes that large scale changes may be daunting and, without adequate validation, these changes may not lead to more reliable results.

Thus, at this time, the Coalition focuses its recommendations on the following:

- **Request that CMS test the HOS data currently collected for adequate representation and validity using samples of results already obtained by separating out diverse populations to test how, or if, they are represented.**
- **Expand the languages available beyond the current three, perhaps by adhering to translation requirements in place for Medicare Advantage plans' member materials.**

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Note: The Coalition observes that the issues noted above also apply to the HOS-Modified which is used for PACE and FIDESNP plans.