BACKGROUND

CAHPS® is a widely used survey instrument measuring consumer experiences with health care. The National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database (NCBD) project, funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, has compiled CAHPS® survey results from a variety of sponsors into a single national database, the NCBD, that enables participants to compare their results to relevant benchmarks such as national and regional averages. CAHPS® measures the four overall beneficiary ratings of experience: rating of plan, care, personal doctor, and specialist. It also measures several other components of service including getting needed care, communication with providers, getting care quickly, getting special medical equipment and services, and getting prescription medicine. There are adult and child versions of CAHPS®. The 2003 database holds survey results for approximately 350,000 adults and children enrolled in commercial, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and Medicare plans (refer to http://www.cahps.ncps.org).

CMS' Center for Medicaid and State Operations is attempting to improve health care quality in both the Medicaid and SCHIP Programs. We analyzed 2003 NCBD data to highlight the following factors that are viewed as critical in assessing Medicaid recipients’ reported experience with health care:

• Comparison of Medicaid with commercial health plans in CAHPS® ratings.
• Comparison between adult and children’s CAHPS® ratings.

RESULT HIGHLIGHTS

Children

Table 1 compares demographic characteristics of children surveyed in Medicaid and commercial plans. Compared to commercial plans, children in Medicaid were more likely to be non-White, under age 1 or over age 13, have less education, be enrolled in a health maintenance organization (HMO), and reside in the South.

Table 2 compares CAHPS® ratings of Medicaid and commercial children. Medicaid children gave more favorable ratings of their personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and their health plan (Figure 1). Medicaid children were slightly less likely than commercial children to respond that they always get help or care when they called the office, needed care immediately, or received an appointment as soon as they wanted. They were also less likely than commercial children to respond that they always received needed care the same day, but slightly more likely to respond that they received regular or routine care within 3 days.

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Medicaid children were about as likely as commercial children to experience always being treated with respect and courtesy by office staff (79.2 versus 80.5 percent), and to feel that office staff was always helpful (67.3 versus 66.2 percent). Medicaid children compared to commercial children experienced more problems seeing a specialist, getting a doctor they were happy with, and getting necessary care, tests, and treatment. Paperwork was perceived as more of a problem with Medicaid children than commercial children. Doctors or other providers explaining things so they could always be understood was more of a problem for Medicaid children as was being able to talk to the doctor about care.

**Adults**

Medicaid adults compared to commercial adults were more likely to be female, non-White, under age 25, have less formal education, be enrolled in an HMO, and reside in the Midwest (Table 3). Medicaid adults were also more likely to rate their health status as fair or poor, to smoke every day, to indicate that they did not need to see a specialist, and to indicate that they were at the emergency room in the last 12 months (Table 4).

Table 5 compares adults in Medicaid and commercial in terms of CAHPS® ratings. Adult Medicaid beneficiaries were more likely than their commercial counterparts to respond that their personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and health plan were “the best possible” (Figure 2). However, adults in Medicaid compared to adults in commercial plans were less likely to respond that they always received help or care when they called the office, needed care immediately, or wanted an appointment. In addition, adults in Medicaid compared to commercial plan beneficiaries were less likely to receive care the same day when they needed that care immediately. They were more likely, on the other hand, to receive regular or routine care that they needed within 3 days. Medicaid adults had more problems seeing a specialist and in getting necessary care, tests, and treatments than commercial adults.

**CONCLUSION**

CAHPS® ratings of children and adults in Medicaid, in terms of overall care and specific aspects of care tend to be related. In general, CAHPS® ratings of personal doctor/registered nurse, specialist, health care, and health plan tend to be higher for both children and adult beneficiaries enrolled in Medicaid health plans than for children and adult commercial beneficiaries. However, commercial plan enrollees, both children and adults, tend to have higher ratings for getting help and care immediately for non-routine care. Medicaid enrollees tend to experience slightly fewer delay problems with regular or routine care. However, according to their ratings, Medicaid plan enrollees whether children or adult, tend to experience more problems in seeing a specialist and in getting necessary care, tests, and treatments.

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### Table 1
**Demographic Characteristics of Children Surveyed in Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003**

| Variable                  | Demographic | Medicaid | Commercial |
|---------------------------|-------------|----------|------------|
| Sex of Child              | Female      | 47.2     | 48.7       |
| Race of Child             | White       | 47.0     | 82.1       |
| Age of Child              |             |          |            |
| <1 Year                   | 3.0         | 0.2      |
| 1-4 Years                 | 35.9        | 28.1     |
| 5-9 Years                 | 33.3        | 35.3     |
| 10-13 Years               | 23.4        | 36.5     |
| 14-18 Years               | 4.4         | 0.0      |
| Education of Caretaker    |             |          |            |
| 8th Grade or <            | 4.8         | 0.2      |
| Some High School, But Not Graduated | 15.9   | 1.5      |
| High School Graduate or GED | 40.5   | 18.4     |
| Some College or 2-Year Degree | 31.2   | 36.0     |
| 4-Year College Degree     | 5.3         | 24.1     |
| More Than 4-Year College Degree | 2.3 | 19.7     |
| Model Type                |             |          |            |
| HMO                       | 88.1        | 55.5     |
| HMO/POS Combined          | 0.0         | 45.5     |
| PCCM                      | 11.9        | 0.0      |
| Region or Member State    |             |          |            |
| Midwest                   | 29.3        | 29.9     |
| Northeast                 | 13.7        | 26.7     |
| South                     | 40.9        | 25.6     |
| West                      | 16.1        | 17.7     |

**NOTES:** GED is General Educational Development. HMO is health maintenance organization. HMO/POS is health maintenance organization/point-of-service. PCCM is primary care care management.

**SOURCE:** Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.
### Table 2
Comparison of Medicaid and Commercial Children's CAHPS® Ratings: 2003

| Item                                      | Medicaid |           | Commercial |           |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                                           | Response | Total N   | Percent    | Total N   | Percent    |
| **Overall Ratings**                       |          |           |            |           |
| Personal Doctor/Registered Nurse          | Best Possible | 12,797 | 41.2     | 672 | 39.3     |
| Specialist                                | Best Possible | 3,067  | 45.5     | 194 | 36.7     |
| Health Care                               | Best Possible | 11,238 | 45.2     | 651 | 37.2     |
| Health Plan                               | Best Possible | 13,001 | 42.5     | 482 | 26.0     |
| **Getting Help/Care**                     |          |           |            |           |
| When Called Office                        | Always   | 12,385 | 69.4     | 1,046 | 72.5     |
| When Need Care Immediately                | Always   | 8,354  | 68.9     | 598  | 70.9     |
| Appointment as Soon as Wanted             | Always   | 8,175  | 58.9     | 838  | 56.5     |
| **Days Waiting for Help/Care**            |          |           |            |           |
| When Need Care Immediately                | Same Day | 7,467  | 74.0     | 701  | 83.7     |
| When Need Regular/Routine Care            | 3 Days or Fewer | 11,282 | 70.3     | 149  | 67.0     |
| **Potential Problems**                    |          |           |            |           |
| Getting Doctor/Registered Nurse That I'm Happy With | Not a Problem | 10,836 | 78.4     | 761  | 78.9     |
| Seeing a Specialist                        | Not a Problem | 3,814  | 66.4     | 404  | 74.4     |
| Getting Necessary Care/Tests/Treatments   | Not a Problem | 7,492  | 81.8     | 899  | 88.1     |
| Delay of Care Waiting for Approval        | Not a Problem | 8,687  | 81.4     | 244  | 72.6     |
| Getting Special Medical Equipment         | Not a Problem | 948    | 72.1     | N/A  | N/A      |
| Getting Therapy for Child                 | Not a Problem | 939    | 68.0     | N/A  | N/A      |
| Getting Treatment/Counseling              | Not a Problem | 1,800  | 68.2     | N/A  | N/A      |
| Finding/Understanding Plan Materials       | Not a Problem | 3,487  | 77.8     | 281  | 65.0     |
| Getting Customer Service Help             | Not a Problem | 5,458  | 67.7     | 285  | 70.4     |
| Complaints Solved to Satisfaction         | Yes      | 888    | 76.9     | 52   | 76.5     |
| Paperwork                                 | Not a Problem | 4,639  | 76.6     | 217  | 82.8     |
| Getting Refill of Prescription Medicine   | Not a Problem | 9,256  | 85.3     | N/A  | N/A      |
| **Treatment by Office Staff**             |          |           |            |           |
| With Respect/Courtesy                     | Always   | 19,755 | 79.2     | 1,141 | 80.5     |
| Helpful                                   | Always   | 16,772 | 67.3     | 1,157 | 66.2     |
| **Doctor/Provider Behavior**              |          |           |            |           |
| Listen To You Carefully                   | Always   | 18,465 | 74.0     | 1,319 | 75.4     |
| Hard Understanding/Different Language     | Never    | 21,040 | 84.5     | N/A  | N/A      |
| Explain So You Understand                 | Always   | 18,778 | 75.4     | 1,436 | 82.1     |
| Respect What You Say                      | Always   | 18,308 | 75.6     | 1,352 | 77.4     |
| Spend Enough Time With Child              | Always   | 11,103 | 62.0     | 1,126 | 64.3     |
| Child Able To Talk To Doctor About Care   | Yes      | 11,517 | 60.4     | 1,266 | 72.5     |
| Child Has Hard Time Understanding Provider| Never    | 11,396 | 82.6     | N/A  | N/A      |
| Doctor/Provider Explain Things To Child Appropriately | Always | 9,223 | 63.7     | 799  | 63.6     |
| How Often Doctor Makes Easy Discussing Concerns | Always | 3,095 | 59.6     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Get Information Needed From Doctor | Always | 2,935 | 56.5     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Have Questions Answered By Doctor | Always | 3,239 | 62.3     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Doctor Offers Health Care Choices | Always | 2,508 | 55.5     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Doctor Discusses Good/Bad Healthy Choices | Always | 2,889 | 64.0     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Doctor Asked Choice You Preferred | Always | 2,382 | 52.8     | N/A  | N/A      |
| How Often Doctor Involved You             | Always   | 3,060  | 67.5     | N/A  | N/A      |

**SOURCE:** Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.
### Table 3
Demographic Characteristics of Children Surveyed in Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003

| Variable                               | Medicaid | Commercial |
|----------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Sex                                    | 76.5     | 58.2       |
| Race                                   | 58.2     | 79.9       |
| Age 18-24 Years                        | 19.6     | 3.8        |
| 25-34 Years                            | 22.9     | 12.6       |
| 35-44 Years                            | 22.5     | 21.6       |
| 45-54 Years                            | 16.3     | 26.7       |
| 55-64 Years                            | 12.1     | 22.3       |
| 65-74 Years                            | 4.3      | 7.6        |
| 75 Years or >                          | 2.3      | 5.4        |
| Education 8th Grade or <               | 9.4      | 1.3        |
| Some High School, Did Not Graduate     | 22.1     | 3.6        |
| High School Graduate or GED            | 39.4     | 25.2       |
| Some College or 2-Year Degree          | 24.6     | 34.2       |
| 4-Year College Degree                  | 3.0      | 17.4       |
| More Than 4-Year College Degree        | 1.5      | 18.4       |
| Model Type                             |          |            |
| HMO                                    | 88.6     | 43.9       |
| HMO/POS Combined                       | 1.9      | 34.0       |
| PPO                                    | 0.0      | 18.7       |
| PCCM                                   | 8.1      | 0.0        |
| Commercial Indemnity                  | 0.0      | 0.3        |
| FFS                                    | 1.3      | 0.0        |
| Region of Member State                 |          |            |
| Midwest                                | 38.2     | 28.4       |
| Northeast                              | 18.6     | 17.2       |
| South                                  | 24.4     | 21.8       |
| West                                   | 18.8     | 25.3       |

**NOTES:** GED is General Educational Development, HMO is health maintenance organization, HMO/POS is health maintenance organization/point-of-service, PPO is preferred provider organization, PCCM is primary care case management, FFS is fee-for-service.

**SOURCE:** Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.
**Table 4**

Survey Characteristics of Adult Status and Behavior, by Medicaid and Commercial Plans: 2003

| Variable                                      | Response | Medicaid | Commercial |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|----------|------------|
| **Health Status**                             |          |          |            |
| Excellent                                     | 11.7     | 17.7     |            |
| Very Good                                     | 21.9     | 40.3     |            |
| Good                                          | 30.7     | 31.7     |            |
| Fair                                          | 25.0     | 8.9      |            |
| Poor                                          | 10.7     | 1.5      |            |
| **Smoking**                                   |          |          |            |
| Every Day                                     | 54.1     | 24.9     |            |
| Some Days                                     | 16.7     | 10.5     |            |
| Not at All                                    | 28.7     | 64.4     |            |
| Don’t Know                                    | 0.5      | 0.2      |            |
| **Needed to See Specialist**                  |          |          |            |
| Yes                                           | 43.5     | 54.7     |            |
| No                                            | 56.5     | 45.3     |            |
| **Saw Specialist**                            |          |          |            |
| Yes                                           | 38.4     | 54.5     |            |
| No                                            | 61.6     | 45.3     |            |
| **Made Appointment for Non-Emergency Care**   |          |          |            |
| Yes                                           | 67.4     | 77.3     |            |
| No                                            | 32.6     | 22.7     |            |
| **Times at Emergency Room in Last 12 Months** |          |          |            |
| None                                          | 66.0     | 80.3     |            |
| 1                                             | 18.4     | 14.3     |            |
| 2                                             | 7.9      | 3.5      |            |
| 3                                             | 3.7      | 1.1      |            |
| 4                                             | 1.7      | 0.4      |            |
| 5-9                                           | 1.6      | 0.3      |            |
| 10 or >                                       | 0.7      | 0.1      |            |

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.
### Table 5
Comparison of Medicaid and Commercial Adult CAHPS® Rating: 2003

| Item                                | Response           | Medicaid   | Commercial | Medicaid   | Commercial |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                     |                    | Total N    | Percent    | Total N    | Percent    |
| **Overall Ratings**                 |                    |            |            |            |            |
| Personal Doctor/Registered Nurse    | Best Possible      | 30,333     | 44.9       | 96,658     | 31.5       |
| Specialist                          | Best Possible      | 22,988     | 42.6       | 61,338     | 34.0       |
| Health Care                         | Best Possible      | 10,766     | 35.6       | 96,861     | 25.6       |
| Health Plan                         | Best Possible      | 38,087     | 34.6       | 111,613    | 20.6       |
| **Getting Help/Care**               |                    |            |            |            |            |
| When Called Office                  | Always             | 23,149     | 55.5       | 73,582     | 57.3       |
| When Need Care Immediately          | Always             | 21,558     | 55.9       | 113,423    | 61.2       |
| Appointment As Soon As Wanted       | Always             | 21,077     | 46.0       | 87,293     | 42.3       |
| **Days Waiting For Help/Care**      |                    |            |            |            |            |
| When Need Care Immediately          | Same Day           | 15,974     | 40.7       | 43,246     | 61.8       |
| When Need Regular/Routine Care      | 3 Days or Fewer    | 23,320     | 57.3       | 84,686     | 47.8       |
| **Potential Problems**              |                    |            |            |            |            |
| Getting Doctor/Nurse That I'm Happy With | Not a Problem   | 22,338     | 66.7       | 70,020     | 69.6       |
| Seeing a Specialist                 | Not a Problem      | 13,954     | 63.6       | 61,571     | 75.7       |
| Getting Necessary Care/Tests/Treatments | Not a Problem   | 20,819     | 73.8       | 79,112     | 83.5       |
| Delay of Care Waiting For Approval  | Not a Problem      | 15,292     | 64.8       | 79,633     | 67.3       |
| Getting Customer Service Help       | Not a Problem      | 12,942     | 64.0       | 47,390     | 63.8       |
| Complaints Solved To Satisfaction   | Yes                | 2,312      | 75.7       | 12,112     | 75.5       |
| Paperwork                           | Not a Problem      | 6,864      | 70.5       | 24,139     | 71.4       |
| Taken To Exam Room Within 15 Minutes| Always             | 24,654     | 18.5       | 96,712     | 17.0       |
| **Treatment by Office Staff**       |                    |            |            |            |            |
| With Respect/Courtesy               | Always             | 30,390     | 72.6       | 97,214     | 72.4       |
| Helpful                             | Always             | 18,037     | 59.3       | 97,199     | 55.9       |
| **Doctor/Provider Behavior**        |                    |            |            |            |            |
| Listen To You Carefully             | Always             | 19,014     | 62.6       | 97,137     | 59.1       |
| Hard Understanding/Different Language| Never             | 24,240     | 79.9       | N/A        | N/A        |
| Explain So You Understand           | Always             | 18,935     | 62.4       | 97,165     | 62.5       |
| Respect What You Say                | Always             | 19,546     | 64.4       | 97,136     | 62.3       |
| Spend Enough Time With You          | Always             | 15,862     | 52.3       | 97,091     | 49.4       |

**SOURCE:** Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.
Figure 1
Medicaid and Commercial Children’s CAHPS® Overall Ratings: 2003

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.

Figure 2
Adult Medicaid Versus Commercial CAHPS® Overall Ratings: 2003

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Data from the National CAHPS® Benchmarking Database, 2003.