



Responsibilities of Primary Care First (PCF) Practice Sites for the Patient Experience of Care Survey (PECS)

Authorize a survey vendor to conduct the survey

The list of approved PCF vendors will be published no later than **May 31, 2021** on PCF Connect and on the [PCF PECS web portal](#). Practice sites will be required to authorize their PECS vendor by **June 30, 2021**. Practices and vendors will enter into a formal written contract and practices will submit a copy of their Business Associate Agreement (BAA) during the vendor authorization process.

Authorizing a vendor is an easy 2-step process:

1. **Register on the [PCF PECS web portal](#)**. A designated staff member serving as the PCF PECS Administrator will register on the website and obtain a username and password.
2. **Authorize a vendor.** The staff member who registered in Step 1 will select a vendor from an approved list on the [PCF PECS web portal](#). Once authorization is submitted, it remains valid for the duration of the model, unless the practice site terminates it (see “Switching Vendors” below for more details). Vendor authorization must be completed by **June 30, 2021**.

Practices will receive access to the PCF PECS web portal and additional instructions via First Edition and PCF Connect when the authorized vendor list is published.

Switching vendors

If a practice site decides to switch vendors, they should edit Survey Vendor Authorization on the [PCF PECS web portal](#) by selecting the new vendor’s name and entering the date this new vendor is authorized to collect and submit data for the practice site.

Please note that CMS **does not recommend** switching survey vendors once data collection has begun. Practices who switch vendors during data collection will have a truncated data collection timeline compared to other practices in the PCF Model. A new vendor may not be able to meet established PECS deadlines with a truncated data collection timeline and the practice risks a 0 PECS score, failing the Quality Gateway, and negative implications to Performance-Based Adjustment (PBA) for the Performance Year. CMS recommends practices make all vendor selections before sample is released or after survey vendors have submitted data.

Roster submission

All PCF practices are required to submit a patient roster in **early summer 2021**. Roster instructions, templates, and on-demand webinar will be made available to practices and

HIT/EHR vendors in late spring 2021. Practices will receive communication about these materials and deadlines via First Edition and Connect.

Notify PECS vendor of residential care/assisted living facilities

Practice sites must communicate to their authorized survey vendor the names and addresses of residential care facilities and assisted living facilities where patients in their practice site reside. All facilities where 5 or more of their patients reside must be identified. To identify facilities, the practice site may scan through their patient’s addresses or may do a geographical search of nearby residential care/assisted living facilities. The vendor will be responsible for identifying these patients residing at these facilities if they are sampled. These patients will receive a special envelope designed to catch the attention of facility staff and solicit proxy respondents and will not receive telephone follow-up due to the burden this causes facility staff.

Communicate with patients about the survey in accordance with CMS specifications

- **Hang the PECS poster.** CMS will provide electronic versions (in multiple size options) of a PECS poster with key information about the survey in multiple languages. Practice sites must download the poster, print it, and hang at least one in a well-visible area of their practice site beginning in **April 2021**.
- **Print Waiting Room FAQs.** CMS will provide an electronic version of Waiting Room FAQs in English and Spanish to practices. Practice sites must print the FAQs and keep them in their waiting rooms beginning in **April 2021**.
The poster and Waiting Room FAQs will be distributed via the First Edition newsletter and posted on PCF Connect.
- **Respond to patient questions and comments about the survey.** 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. If a patient talks to practice staff about the survey, practice staff should answer questions according to the response given in the Waiting Room FAQs and assure patients of confidentiality.

Do	Do <u>Not</u>
Express support for the survey	Ask patients if they would like to be included in the survey
Answer questions based on the Waiting Room FAQs	Influence patients’ answers on the survey
Confirm the legitimacy of the survey and the survey vendor	Attempt to determine which patients were sampled
Confirm that participation is voluntary	Solicit positive feedback from patients in the survey

Do	Do <u>Not</u>
Assure patients that the practice has no way of knowing who responds to the survey. Patient names are never reported, only responses.	Imply that the practice or providers will be rewarded for positive feedback
Confirm that their participation will not affect the care they receive	Offer incentives of any kind for participating in the survey
Confirm that their participation will not affect their Medicare benefits or other healthcare benefits	Provide a copy of the questionnaire to patients

Administering PCF PECS in conjunction with other surveys

To avoid imposing on patients, CMS strongly encourages practice sites to refrain from conducting other patient surveys or census surveys from **4 weeks prior to and during the period when the PCF PECS is actively surveying**. CMS-sponsored surveys such as the CAHPS® Survey for Accountable Care Organizations Participating in Medicare Initiatives are exempt from this guidance.

- When conducting other surveys, practice sites must not ask any additional survey questions that are the same as or similar to those included in the PCF PECS questionnaire. (This guidance does not apply to other CMS-sponsored surveys).
- Other surveys can include questions that ask for more in-depth information as long as the questions are different from those included in the PCF PECS.

Additional details on all these practice responsibilities can be found in the PCF PECS Quality Assurance Guidelines for Survey Vendors (available Spring 2021) on the [PCF PECS web portal](#).

*Questions? Contact **PCF Support** at PCF@telligen.com or 888-517-7753.*