

# CMS Has Added a New Five-Star Ratings Tool to Help Patients Compare and Choose Among Home Health Agencies

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On January 28, 2016, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) added a new and useful five-star ratings comparison tool to the Home Health Compare system. According to CMS, the new comparison tool will help patients “quickly and easily assess the patient experience of care information provided on Home Health Compare.”

The new five-star scale ratings tool is tied directly to patient experiences, and it is the first such star rating tool for Home Health Compare. The star ratings are derived from the Home Health Care Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HHCAHPS) survey, a national, standardized, 34-item survey specifically designed to measure the experiences of people receiving home health care from Medicare-certified home health agencies. The HHCAHPS survey is conducted for home health agencies by approved HHCAHPS Survey vendors.

Star rating comparison information available under the new tool compliments and expands on the other comparison information that CMS makes available to patients and their families. The new tool provides (HHCAHPS) survey star ratings for home health agencies in the following categories: (1) care of patients, (2) communication between providers and patients, (3) specific care issues, (4) overall rating of care provided by the home health agency (i.e., an HHCAHPS global component), and (5) Survey Summary Star rating. The Survey Summary Star rating is based on the four HHCAHPS survey measures (the three composites and the one global component) that receive Star Ratings. The Survey Summary Star averages these ratings and rounds the score using normal rounding rules. As one would expect, more stars indicates better quality care, and five stars is the best rating.

CMS intends for patients who use the new five-star comparison tool to learn how well home health agencies care for their patients, how often each agency uses best practices when caring for its patients, whether patients improve in certain important areas of care, and what other patients have said about their recent home health care experience. Currently, 6,000 home health agencies have patient care experience star ratings, and that number will increase as additional data from patient surveys is available. CMS will regularly update its Internet site to add more agencies. Full details on the Home Health Compare tool are available on CMS' Internet site:

<https://www.medicare.gov/homehealthcompare/search.html>



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