

## Part Three: Pediatric Care

### Pediatric Patient Experience at Hospitals

#### Report Highlights

- For children receiving hospital care, parents and guardians reported the least favorable positive experiences about their ability to report concerns and whether hospital staff confirmed the identity of the patient, a major problem for patient safety.
- Parents or guardians reported more favorably regarding the Communication with Doctors domain, and this improved during the pandemic.
- More transparency is crucial: more hospitals need to publicly report on the experience of their pediatric patients, and the findings need to be accessible and understandable for a consumer and purchaser audience.

#### Where the data comes from

This report examines patient experience data collected by hospitals through a standardized survey called the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Child Hospital Survey (Child HCAHPS) that hospitals submitted to the 2019 and 2021 Leapfrog Hospital Surveys.

The reporting period for Child HCAHPS on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey is the latest 12 months prior to Survey submission. The 2019 Leapfrog Hospital Survey reflects a pre-Covid time frame, and the 2021 Hospital Survey reflects a mid-pandemic time frame. More information on the content and interpretation of patient experience surveys can be found in [Appendix A](#).

#### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted health care delivery at every level and setting, from staffing shortages to increased infections to the very care patients receive. It has never been more critical to assess patient perspectives, both to assure that the patient voice is accounted for and heard, and to obtain vital information on the overall safety and quality of care being delivered. This is the final report in a three-part series from The Leapfrog Group examining patient experience during the pandemic. The [first report](#) in the series examined outpatient surgical care, and the [second report](#) examined adult inpatient care.

Hospitals have endured intense tumult throughout the pandemic and assessing pediatric patient experience through the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey Child Hospital Survey (Child HCAHPS) provides insight on how the delivery of care was impacted. Leapfrog asks facilities participating in the Leapfrog Hospital Survey to report the results of the Child HCAHPS surveys and then makes this information available on its [public reporting website](#).

Hospitals caring for pediatric patients are not required to report the results of Child HCAHPS like adult patients' HCAHPS results are reported. Studies find that reliable patient experience data heavily correlates with safety and quality, and the collection and use of the data helps put patients at the core of health care delivery<sup>i ii</sup>. Without Leapfrog's public reporting of this data, patients may struggle to find and compare

information on the experience of pediatric patients and their caregivers at hospitals when choosing where to seek care. Leapfrog and its health care purchaser constituency call on all hospitals across the U.S. to conduct the Child HCAHPS survey and report results to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Leapfrog.

## Patient Experience in Pediatric Hospitals

Leapfrog includes five areas of care from the CAHPS Child Hospital Survey:

- **How Well Doctors Communicate with Your Child**  
*How often did your child's doctors listen carefully to your child? How often did your child's doctors explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? How often did your child's doctors encourage your child to ask questions?*
- **How Well Nurses Communicate with Your Child**  
*How often did your child's nurses listen carefully to your child? How often did your child's nurses explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? How often did your child's nurses encourage your child to ask questions?*
- **Keeping You Informed About Your Child's Care**  
*How often did providers keep you informed about what was being done for your child? How often did providers give you as much information as you wanted about the results of tests like blood tests and x-rays?*
- **Communication about Your Child's Medicines**  
*During the first day of this hospital stay, were you asked to list or review all the prescription medicines your child was taking at home? Were you asked to list or review all the vitamins, herbal medicines, and over-the-counter medicines your child was taking at home? Did a provider or hospital pharmacist explain in a way that was easy to understand how your child should take new medicines after leaving the hospital? Did they explain in a way that was easy to understand about possible side effects of new medicines?*
- **Preventing Mistakes and Helping You Report Concerns**  
*Before giving your child any medicine, how often did providers or other hospital staff check your child's wristband or confirm his or her identity in some other way? Did providers or other hospital staff tell you how to report if you had any concerns about mistakes in your child's health care?*

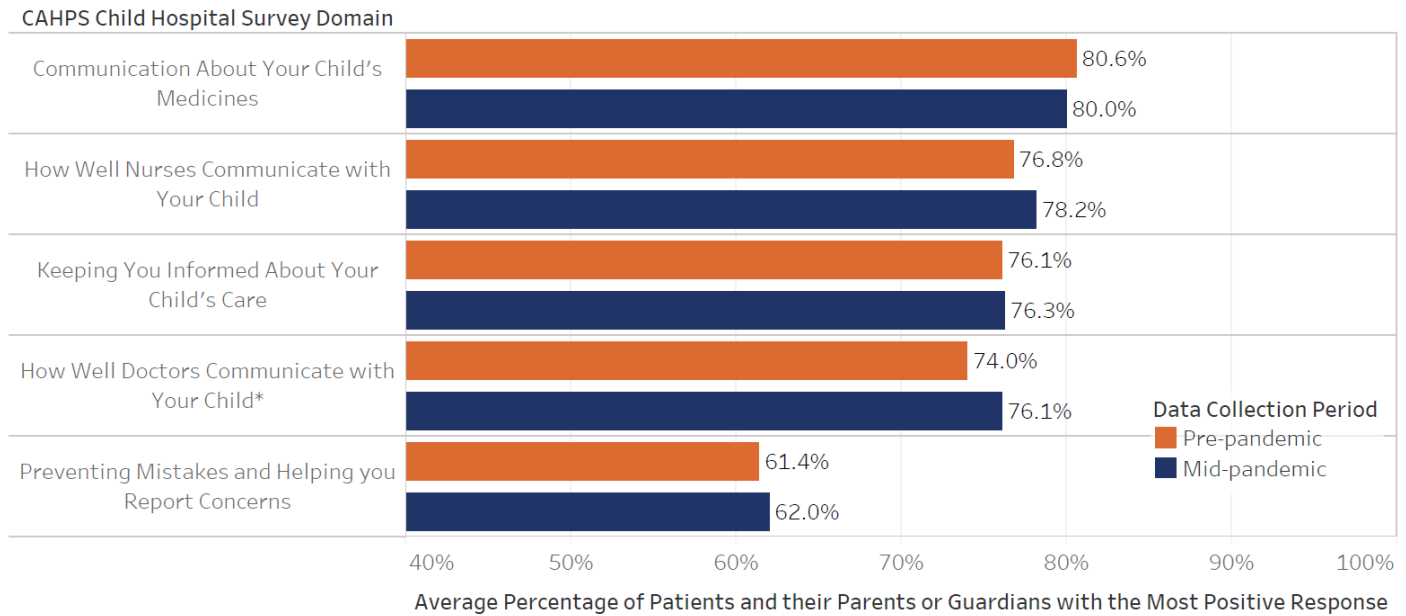
Details about each measure and underlying questions, along with the response options, can be found in [Appendix B](#) of this report. This analysis includes information from hospitals that treat pediatric patients that voluntarily administered the CAHPS Child Hospital Survey and submitted their results to the 2019 and 2021 Leapfrog Hospital Survey. The report does not include information submitted to the 2020 Leapfrog Hospital Survey as hospitals had the option to reuse Survey results from the previous year. Facilities issue a Child HCAHPS to parents or guardians of pediatric patients who have recently had an inpatient hospital stay to assess the care their child received.

## Analysis

To evaluate hospital performance on Child HCAHPS for this report, hospitals report their Top Box Score to Leapfrog, which represents the percent of survey respondents who chose the most positive response for a given item. For example, a parent or caregiver of a patient may indicate that doctors *always* listened carefully to their child or that they would *definitely* recommend the facility to friends or family. Across domains, patient experience for pediatric inpatients remained relatively stable when comparing pre-pandemic and mid-pandemic time frames. In fact, the data points to slight improvements among most domains. The areas examined correlate with maintaining patient safety and protecting pediatric patients from unnecessary harm. On average:

- Parents or caregivers of pediatric patients gave the least favorable responses to the **Preventing Mistakes and Helping you Report Concerns** questions with marginal differences between pre-pandemic (61.4%) and mid-pandemic (62%).
- Parents or caregivers gave the most favorable responses to the **Communication about Your Child's Medicines** questions pre-pandemic (80.6%) and mid-pandemic (80%).
- Parents or caregivers reported more favorable responses to the **How Well Doctors Communicate with Your Child** survey questions mid-pandemic (76.1%) than pre-pandemic (74%).
- Parents or caregivers who selected the most favorable responses for **How Well Nurses Communicate with Your Child** varies slightly pre-pandemic (76.8%) and mid-pandemic (78.2%)
- The most favorable responses for the **Keeping you Informed about Your Child's Care** remained stable between pre-pandemic (76.1%) and mid-pandemic (76.3%).

**Average percentage of patients and their parents/guardians who gave the most favorable responses on the Child HCAHPS survey pre-pandemic (2019; n=117 hospitals) and mid-pandemic (2021; n=82 hospitals).**



Asterisk (\*) denotes p-value < .05. Source: 2019 and 2021 Leapfrog Hospital Survey

Even before the pandemic, parents or caregivers indicated the least favorable responses about whether hospital staff check the patient's wristband to confirm their identity and if parents were told how to report mistakes about their child's care. This raises serious concerns about patient safety, as giving the wrong medication can result in serious harm or even death. Parents or guardians are an essential part of the caregiver team and hospitals should empower them with a welcoming, open environment to report concerns. A parent by their child's bedside throughout a hospital stay may be better equipped than a medical provider to notice when something is wrong. Feeling prepared to speak up immediately when they observe problems is a critical patient safety indicator, improving the odds of preventing or reducing harm from errors.

When comparing the pre-pandemic and mid-pandemic data, the data demonstrates improvement on how well doctors communicated with pediatric patients by a statistically significant amount. Clear and understandable communication between doctors and patients can be reassuring to both parents and patients and can help prevent errors like medication mix-ups or misdiagnoses. Parents or caregivers gave the most favorable responses to medication communication both before the pandemic and during the pandemic. Effective communication about medicines—reviewing current medications and vitamins the child is taking, and new medications they will take once discharged—can reduce or prevent medication errors.

**The Importance of Public Access to Patient Experience Data and Other Assessments of Quality and Safety**

The Child HCAHPS survey is a valuable tool for a variety of stakeholders, as long as the data is publicly available. Since reporting Child HCAHPS to CMS is not yet mandated for pediatric hospitals and pediatric patients at general hospitals, it is only available for facilities that voluntarily report this information through the Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

The Leapfrog Hospital Survey is the only opportunity for facilities to report Child HCAHPS results in a consumer-

friendly format. Results of pediatric patient experience surveys are available and accessible at [Ratings.LeapfrogGroup.org](https://Ratings.LeapfrogGroup.org), and are displayed under “Experience of Children and their Parents.”

While all hospitals can report to the Leapfrog Surveys at no cost to them, some decline to participate. If a hospital declines to report to Leapfrog, employers, patients, and community members are encouraged to contact facility leadership and ask them to do so.

For facilities that voluntarily participate in the Leapfrog Surveys, the act of public reporting is beneficial not only for patients and families who entrust their lives to the facility’s care, but also for the facility’s physicians, nurses, staff, and leadership. They benefit from understanding how their patients experienced care in the facility to better identify gaps tied to safety and quality.

## Conclusion

Pediatric inpatients at hospitals appear to have experienced minimal change between a pre-pandemic and mid-pandemic time frame. This suggests that pediatric patients were not as impacted by the regression of quality and safety noted for adult inpatient care and other settings in national analyses by [CMS and the CDC](#). Regardless, there are still significant areas for improvement, especially with the Preventing Mistakes and Helping you Report Concerns domain. Research shows that patient experience is a critical indicator of safety in hospitals, and facilities that provide better experiences for patients tend to provide safer, higher quality care<sup>iii</sup>.

It is also important to note that the sample size for information on pediatric care remains relatively small and more transparency through reporting is needed to capture the fullest picture of the experience of pediatric patients. What’s more, the value of this information is undermined when patients and other stakeholders cannot easily access or comprehend the findings. Leapfrog’s efforts to expand quality and safety reporting in the pediatric setting, including patient experience surveys, are critical to ensuring that parents or guardians have the information they need to make the right health care decisions for their child. Leapfrog and its constituency of employers and purchasers call on CMS to require CAHPS reporting across all areas of patient care, including outpatient surgery and pediatric care.

## Patient Experience During the Pandemic: A Three Part Series From The Leapfrog Group

Part One: [Outpatient Surgical Care](#)

Part Two: [Adult Inpatient Care](#)

Part Three: Pediatric Care

## Appendix A: How Patient Experience Surveys Work

A random sample of patients who have been discharged from a hospital are asked to complete an HCAHPS survey. Surveys are most often administered by an experienced survey vendor and are distributed by mail, telephone, or by mail with a telephonic follow-up.

Across all domains on HCAHPS surveys, participants are asked to check a box reflecting their experience with their care. Most frequently, these questions are phrased with response options like *Never, Sometimes, Usually, Always*; or *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree*. Other times questions are phrased to ask for a 1 – 10 response, where 1 is the least favorable and 10 is the most favorable.

To evaluate overall facility performance on these surveys, Leapfrog looks at the “Top Box Scores,” which is the percent of survey respondents who chose the most positive response for a given item. For example, a patient may indicate that nurses *always* listened carefully to them or that they would *definitely* recommend the facility to friends or family. Looking at the Top Box Score is an approach to understanding responses reflecting the most positive sentiment. In this report, the Top Box Score is referred to as the most favorable response (e.g., *Always* or *Strongly Agree*). To analyze the data included in this report, Leapfrog calculated the average Top Box Score among facilities for which data is available.

Studies have shown that when used correctly, CAHPS results provide valid and reliable measures of quality and safety<sup>iv v</sup>.

Example of a HCAHPS Survey question. In this case “Definitely yes” is the top box.

**19. Would you recommend this hospital to your friends and family?**

1  Definitely no

2  Probably no

3  Probably yes

4  Definitely yes

The “Top Box Score”

**Appendix B: CAHPS Child Hospital Survey**

<p>How Well Doctors Communicate with Your Child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors listen carefully to your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s doctors encourage your child to ask questions? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>How Well Nurses Communicate with Your Child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses listen carefully to your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses explain things in a way that was easy for your child to understand? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did your child’s nurses encourage your child to ask questions? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>Keeping You Informed About Your Child’s Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this hospital stay, how often did providers keep you informed about what was being done for your child? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• How often did providers give you as much information as you wanted about the results of tests like blood tests and x-rays? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>Communication About Your Child’s Medicines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the first day of this hospital stay, were you asked to list or review all of the prescription medicines your child was taking at home? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)</li> <li>• During the first day of this hospital stay, were you asked to list or review all of the vitamins, herbal medicines, and over-the-counter medicines your child was taking at home? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)</li> <li>• Before your child left the hospital, did a provider or hospital pharmacist explain in a way that was easy to understand how your child should take new medicines after leaving the hospital? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)</li> <li>• Before your child left the hospital, did a provider or hospital pharmacist explain in a way that was easy to understand about possible side effects of new medicines? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>Preventing Mistakes and Helping You Report Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before giving your child any medicine, how often did providers or other hospital staff check your child’s wristband or confirm his or her identity in some other way? (<i>Never/ Sometimes/ Usually/ Always</i>)</li> <li>• Mistakes in your child’s health care can include things like giving the wrong medicine or doing the wrong surgery. During this hospital stay, did providers or other hospital staff tell you how to report if you had any concerns about mistakes in your child’s health care? (<i>Yes, definitely/ Yes, somewhat/ No</i>)</li> </ul>

Survey Source: [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](https://www.aHRQ.org)

**References**

<sup>i</sup> Isaac T, Zaslavsky A, Cleary P, Landon B. The relationship between patients’ perception of care and measures of hospital quality and safety. *HSR*. 2010;45(4):1024-1040.

<sup>ii</sup> Kennedy G, Tevis S, Kent K. Is there a relationship between patient satisfaction and favorable outcomes? *Ann Surg*. 2014;260(4):592-600.

<sup>iii</sup> Kennedy G, Tevis S, Kent K. Is there a relationship between patient satisfaction and favorable outcomes? *Ann Surg*. 2014;260(4):592-600.

<sup>iv</sup> Isaac T, Zaslavsky A, Cleary P, Landon B. The relationship between patients’ perception of care and measures of hospital quality and safety. *HSR*. 2010;45(4):1024-1040.

<sup>v</sup> Kennedy G, Tevis S, Kent K. Is there a relationship between patient satisfaction and favorable outcomes? *Ann Surg*. 2014;260(4):592-600.