

Health equity after-hours care

What did the CAHPS survey identify as a targeted disparity?

Our 2021 CAHPS® survey results revealed a disparity when Black/African American members were asked, “In the last 6 months, when you called a doctor’s office or clinic after hours, how often did you get the help you wanted?” As a health care provider, you can help improve this disparity by helping ensure your patients have access to after-hours care and manage their expectations.



Quick facts

- Trust in health care among Americans has declined in recent decades, and it’s worse among Black/African Americans
- In an October 2020 poll, 6 out of 10 Black/African Americans say they’re treated unfairly by the health care system, and 56% say they distrust it
- People who say they mistrust health care organizations are less likely to take medical advice, keep follow-up appointments or fill prescriptions. In addition, they are more likely to report being in poor health.



How to help alleviate patient mistrust

After-hours accessibility

Consider how your after-hours accessibility builds your patient’s level of trust. When a patient needs help, do they:

- Reach the on-call physician directly
- Call an answering service that will contact a physician regarding the emergency
- Talk to a triage nurse who can evaluate the nature of the emergency, then contact a physician or direct them to an emergency room
- Get a recording that will direct them to call a phone number to connect with an answering service that will reach the physician who is on call for an emergency

Manage expectations

It helps to talk about mistrust openly. You can lessen negative assumptions before they take root, particularly when cultural differences are at play. As a health care professional, you know that managing patient expectations is crucial to delivering quality health care. You can help by finding a balance between expectations, perceptions and priorities. Here are some simple reminders:¹

- Help ensure information is easily accessible
- Communicate in a way the patient can understand
- Check the patient’s understanding and let them ask questions
- Show empathy and understanding
- Be open to feedback



More ways to help advance health equity

To learn more about health equity, go to our [Advancing Health Equity activity](#).

¹ Large, A., Managing patient expectations. BDJ Team 7, 31 (2020). Retrieved from doi.org/10.1038/s41407-020-0431-9. CAHPS® is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).