

National Critical Access Hospital Quality Inventory and Assessment

State Flex Program Fact Sheet

Background

The Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Quality Inventory and Assessment “Assessment” is a national survey that was created by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and their partners. The Assessment, first fielded in 2023, allows FORHP to learn more about CAH quality improvement (QI) infrastructure and activities, service lines offered, and related quality measures. The Assessment is an opportunity to gather a wealth of information on QI processes from CAHs in a standardized manner, to enhance support to CAHs in quality improvement activities. The CAH Quality Infrastructure measure is collected through the Assessment, and as a core MBQIP measure, CAHs will be expected to fill out the Assessment annually to submit CAH Quality Infrastructure data.

The goals of the Assessment are to:

- 1) Gather an inventory of hospital service lines and related quality measures to identify trends and help inform Flex initiatives at the state and national levels.
- 2) Assess CAH quality infrastructure to identify gaps and opportunities for enhancement.

Information captured through the Assessment can support quality initiatives at the following levels:

- Hospital-level: Provide state and national comparison information related to quality infrastructure, QI processes, and quality activities and measurement across different CAH service lines.
- State-level: Provide timely, accurate, and useful CAH quality-related information to help inform technical assistance for CAH improvement activities.
- National-level: Provide hospital and state-specific information to help inform the future of MBQIP and national technical assistance and data analytic needs.

Key stakeholders were engaged in creating the Assessment through two convenings:

- 1) An Advisory Group made up of State Flex staff, MBQIP subcontractors, and CAH quality experts provided input on the inventory questions in the Assessment.
- 2) A National CAH Quality Summit brought together additional State Flex staff, MBQIP subcontractors, CAH quality experts, and a FORHP Project Officer to identify key elements of CAH quality infrastructure and criteria to describe those elements. The Summit resulted in a [report](#) that describes the nine core elements of CAH quality infrastructure and related criteria for each element.
- 3) Feedback from CAHs, SFPs, and partners from Year 1 of the Assessment (including instructions, format, and questions) was incorporated into this year’s version of the Assessment.

Benefit to State Flex Programs

By early 2025, each state Flex program will receive:

- A state-level report
- A spreadsheet with data from all CAHs in the state (via their NIH workspace, where MBQIP reports are delivered)

This information will provide SFPs with a wealth of knowledge about their CAHs, and provide the opportunity for collaboration with other states. Some examples of ways to use CAH Assessment data include:

- Using service line data to identify CAHs to work with on new projects (e.g., CAHs with swing beds, RHCs, labor and delivery, etc.).
- Using the CAH quality infrastructure data to identify the CAHs in greatest need for developing their quality infrastructure, and/or the greatest quality infrastructure needs across all the CAHs in your state to develop activities and education in these areas.
- Referencing a CAH's Assessment data before orienting a new quality manager and aligning the orientation conversation with the greatest needs/opportunities for improvement for that CAH.
- Utilizing Assessment data to create learning collaboratives among CAHs with similarities, such as the same EHR vendor or service line.
- Utilizing Assessment data to pair hospitals that have opportunities with those that are more advanced in their implementation of quality activities or use of different quality tools.
- Identifying other states with CAHs that may have similar goals or opportunities for improvement (particularly when the number of hospitals in your state is low) to create a cohort for a QI project.
- Prompting conversations with quality contractors for how to best address some of the improvement opportunities identified in the Assessment.

Process for Launching Assessment to CAHs

[General Assessment resources](#) and specific [SFP resources](#) for the Assessment are available on the FMT website. The following resources will be available for SFPs to begin to prepare their CAHs:

- A pdf version of detailed instructions for the Assessment, with links to specific resources that may be helpful in answering questions in the Assessment.
- A word document version of the Assessment instructions for CAHs to use while collecting their responses (to facilitate collaboration among team members).
- A CAH Fact Sheet with more information about the Assessment, including links to other informative recordings about the Assessment as well as the Core Elements of CAH Quality Infrastructure.
- An email template for SFPs to use when contacting their CAHs (Note: the link to the Assessment will not be live until September 16).
- [CAH Quality Infrastructure measure specifications](#) are also available, to provide more context for the MBQIP measure included in the Assessment.

On September 16, 2024, the link to the Assessment will go live, and SFPs will receive a reminder to begin reaching out to their CAHs.

Key Notes for Completing the Assessment

- The Assessment is administered online via Qualtrics and we expect CAHs will spend approximately 60 minutes *collecting information and completing* the online Assessment. CAHs

must submit their data through the Qualtrics platform – PDFs or word documents will not be accepted for submission.

- CAHs are encouraged to complete the Assessment with input from a variety of team members, but each CAH should submit only one Assessment.
- For CAH staff that may work in multiple hospitals, each hospital should submit a separate Assessment reflecting the responses for each hospital (not their system) individually.
- CAHs will receive an email confirmation of their completion of the Assessment (sent to the submitter and the quality contact they provide) which will also include a copy of their responses to the Assessment.
- CAH Assessment responses from last year may provide a good starting point for CAHs to review their responses, see how they have changed, and collect new/updated information for this year. Emails from last year included the subject line “Your response has been received” and was sent from “monitoring@flexmonitoring.org.”

These and other details are included in the Assessment instructions ([found here](#)) for your reference, as well as for the hospital staff.

In September, SFPs will receive a link to a tracking document to see which of their CAHs have completed the Assessment and be asked to follow up with those who have not completed the Assessment during the Assessment period. FORHP will provide reminder emails throughout the period to prompt your follow-up to your CAHs and encourage them to complete the Assessment by November 22, 2024.

Assessment resources can be found [here](#).

Additional SFP resources for the Assessment can be found [here](#).

CAH Quality Infrastructure measure specifications and resources can be found [here](#).

Any questions about the Assessment (from SFPs or your CAHs) can be directed to Megan Lahr at the Flex Monitoring Team (lahrx074@umn.edu). Thank you for your help in this process!