

Clarification: MA & PDP CAHPS 5 Call Attempts Protocol

Phone Attempts

Survey vendors must attempt to reach each and every beneficiary in the sample. Multiple attempts must be made to a phone number until one of the following occurs:

- An interview is completed or refused
- The beneficiary is determined to have a language barrier or be ineligible (e.g., institutionalized, deceased, mentally or physically unable to respond)
- The number is identified as non-working or incorrect
- The beneficiary case has received five attempts over no fewer than 21 calendar days

A phone attempt occurs when a number is dialed and one of the following occurs:

- The phone rings at least six times with no answer
- Someone answers
- The interviewer gets a busy signal during each of three consecutive dialings (if possible, the three dialings should occur at 20-minute intervals)
- The interviewer reaches an answering machine/privacy manager/voicemail box (the interviewer should hang up the phone without leaving a message)
- The interviewer hears a recorded message indicating the number is disconnected or no longer in service

Maximum number of attempts. The maximum number of attempts to a specific phone number is five; the maximum number of attempts for a beneficiary is five per each number dialed. After five attempts to contact the beneficiary at a specific number have been made, no further attempts are to be made to that number and a second number, if available, must be dialed. If a second or third phone number is dialed for the beneficiary, each of those numbers is eligible for five attempts.

Example 1: The vendor loads two phone numbers for beneficiary #10101010 into the CATI system. The first number receives five phone attempts, for each attempt the phone rings at least six times with no answer. Interviewers begin attempts on the second phone number. In this scenario, the beneficiary case may receive up to ten phone attempts, five to the first number and five to the second.

Example 2: The vendor loads one phone number for beneficiary #12312312 into the CATI system. On the first attempt, the phone rings six times with no answer. On the second attempt, the interviewer gets a busy signal on three consecutive calls. On the third attempt, the phone rings six times with no answer. On the fourth attempt, the interviewer reaches an answering machine and hangs up. On the fifth attempt, the phone is answered by the beneficiary's daughter who provides a new phone number for the beneficiary. The new number is dialed and on the first attempt to that number, the phone rings six times with no answer. On the second attempt, the beneficiary answers the phone and agrees to start the interview but requests a call back two days later. On the third attempt, the beneficiary completes the interview. In this scenario, the beneficiary case received a total of eight phone attempts, five to the original number and three to the number provided by the beneficiary's daughter.

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Example 3: The vendor loads three phone numbers for beneficiary #98798798 into the CATI system. On the first attempt, the phone is answered and the beneficiary's wife informs the interviewer that the beneficiary is physically unable to answer the interview due to a stroke. The beneficiary case is finalized as mentally or physically unable to respond and no further phone attempts are made. In this scenario, the beneficiary case received a total of one phone attempt. Because the beneficiary was determined to be ineligible (mentally or physically unable to respond), no further attempts were made.

Timing of attempts. Phone attempts must occur at different times of day, on different days of the week and in different weeks. Beneficiary cases finalized as maximum attempts must have had dialings over no fewer than 21 calendar days, whether the vendor dials one phone number or multiple phone numbers. If a beneficiary is present but unable to complete the survey for any reason (e.g., he/she is hard of hearing, has a speech impediment, or is too ill or frail to do the interview), survey vendors may attempt to complete the survey with a qualified proxy (see Proxy Respondents in this section).

Example 4: The vendor loads one phone number for beneficiary #24682468 into the CATI system. The first attempt occurs on a weekday afternoon. On the first attempt, the interviewer reaches a voicemail box. A second attempt is made nine calendar days later on a weekend afternoon, and again the interviewer reaches a voicemail box. The third attempt occurs six calendar days later on a weekday evening and the interviewer reaches the beneficiary, who asks for a call back the next morning. On the next calendar day, the fourth attempt occurs and the phone rings six times with no answer. The fifth attempt occurs seven calendar days later and the phone rings six times with no answer. In this scenario, no further calls are made as the beneficiary case received five attempts over 23 calendar days.

Example 5: The vendor loads one phone number for beneficiary #13571357 into the CATI system. The first attempt occurs on a weekday evening. On the first attempt, the interviewer reaches a voicemail box. A second attempt is made seven calendar days later on a weekend morning, and again the interviewer reaches a voicemail box. The third attempt occurs six calendar days later on a weekday afternoon and the interviewer reaches the beneficiary, who asks for a call back the next morning. On the next calendar day, the fourth attempt occurs and the beneficiary again asks for a call back the next calendar day. The fifth attempt occurs one calendar day later and the phone rings six times with no answer. In this scenario, five attempts have occurred over 16 calendar days, so a sixth attempt is necessary and must occur no sooner than five calendar days after the fifth attempt. This ensures that call attempts to this beneficiary have spanned a minimum of 21 calendar days.

Example 6: The vendor loads two phone numbers for beneficiary #45674567 into the CATI system. The first attempt occurs during a weekday afternoon on the first day of outbound CATI. On the first attempt, the phone rings six times with no answer. The second attempt is made four calendar days later on a weekend morning, and again the phone rings six times with no answer. Over the next nine days the third, fourth, and fifth attempts are made and each time the phone rings six times with no answer. The first phone number has had five attempts across different times of day and different week and weekend days. Interviewers begin attempts on the second phone number on the fifteenth day of outbound CATI. On the first attempt to the second phone number, the phone rings six times with no answer.

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Over the next 11 days the second, third, fourth, and fifth attempts are made and each time the phone rings six times with no answer. The second phone number has had five attempts across different times of day and different week and weekend days. The beneficiary case has had attempts across a total of 26 days and is finalized as max attempts.

Proxy Respondents

While beneficiaries are encouraged to respond directly to the mail or telephone questionnaires, not all respondents are able to do so. In such cases, proxy responses are acceptable. The survey instrument allows beneficiaries who are unable to complete the survey to have a family member or other proxy complete the survey for them. Sampled members who are unable to respond to the telephone interview must grant permission for a proxy to assist them. CATI training materials must include instructions for obtaining this permission.

Example 1: After four call attempts during outbound CATI, a fifth attempt is made. On the fifth attempt, the beneficiary answers and indicates he is unable to complete the survey by himself and gives permission for his sister to answer the interview for him. The beneficiary's sister gets on the line and requests a call back at a different phone number to complete the interview. No further effort will be made to interview the beneficiary and calls to the original number will cease. In this scenario, the beneficiary case will receive more than five phone attempts: five to the original number and up to five attempts to the number provided by the sister, to complete a proxy interview.

Example 2: On the second call attempt during outbound CATI, the beneficiary comes to the phone and indicates she prefers her husband to answer the interview on her behalf. The beneficiary's husband comes to the phone and completes the interview. In this scenario, the beneficiary case received two call attempts and resulted in a completed proxy interview.