

National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey

We need your help to
produce valid public
health information

NAMCS

Please consider
participating
in NAMCS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics

Why does "patient's name" appear on the form if you do not collect it?

We ask that you keep that part of the form above the perforation (which contains the patient's name). We collect the remaining information. We want you to keep the patient's name so that if we need to contact you regarding missing or conflicting information from the abstract form, we can give you our unique serial number, which is also contained on the top portion of the form you retain. This will enable you to locate the patient's medical record without disclosing the name to us.

Is participation mandatory?

No, participation is completely voluntary.

Then why should I participate?

Without your participation, neither you nor other physicians or providers like you are represented in the national description of office-based and CHC patient care. You were randomly chosen to represent not only yourself but thousands of other physicians or providers in your geographic region and medical specialty.

For specific questions about how NCHS protects the information you provide, contact:

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<http://www.cdc.gov/NAMCS>

In our introductory letter to you, and on our website at <http://www.cdc.gov/NAMCS>, we have included all the information you need to be assured that you are allowed to disclose protected health information for NAMCS. However, there are a few things you must do to ensure compliance with the Privacy Rule when participating in the survey.

First, the privacy notice you generally provide to your patients must indicate that patient information may be disclosed for either research or public health purposes. Second, you may need to keep a record of the disclosure (which we will provide), which shows that some data from the patient's medical record were disclosed to CDC for NAMCS. Of course, if you do not transmit health information (such as claims data) electronically, you are not subject to the Privacy Rule or the requirements described above.

Why does the HIPAA Privacy Rule apply to the data collected for NAMCS?

The Privacy Rule applies to data collected for NAMCS because we are asking you to provide certain information about patients without their authorization. For public health and research purposes, NAMCS collects information from the patient's medical record, such as visit date, birth date, and residential ZIP code. Although not directly identifiable, these data are considered protected health information as defined by the Privacy Rule. As described above, the rule allows you to disclose this information for public health and research purposes.

Will anyone be able to identify my practice in the survey data?

No, we are legally bound to ensure the confidentiality of your responses, including anything that might result in your practice being identified. The data files released for research do not include any provider or patient identifying information.

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Frequently asked questions about NAMCS

What is NAMCS?

The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) is a probability sample survey of patient visits to office-based physicians. As in 2009, physicians and midlevel providers at community health centers (CHCs) will be included in the 2010 sample. NAMCS consists of a brief interview with you and the abstraction of patient and visit information from approximately 30 patient encounters during a 1-week reporting period. Office-based physicians and physicians or midlevel providers at CHCs are randomly selected and assigned to 1 of 52 reporting weeks during the year. The encounter information includes items on patient's age, sex, and race; physician diagnosis; diagnostic and therapeutic services ordered or provided; and medications prescribed or provided.

How are the data used?

NAMCS data are used to statistically describe the patients who use office-based physician services and services provided at CHCs, the conditions most often treated, and the diagnostic and therapeutic services rendered, including medications prescribed. The data are used by public health policymakers, health services researchers, medical schools, physician associations, epidemiologists, and the print and broadcast media to describe and understand the changes that occur in medical care requirements and practices over time. The data are disseminated in the form of public health reports, journal articles, and microdata files.

Under what authorization do you collect this information?

NAMCS falls under Title 42, United States Code, Section 242k, which permits data collection for health research. The confidentiality of the data is protected by Title 42, United States Code, Section 242m(d). Information collected in NAMCS is used only for statistical purposes. No information that could identify a person or establishment can be released to anyone without the consent of the provider. The U.S. Census Bureau staff, who are collecting the data for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), sign an affidavit making them subject to the Privacy Act, the Public Health Service Act, and other laws that require data to be protected. NCHS and the U.S. Census Bureau have maintained a perfect record in protecting the privacy of health care providers and patients.

Does the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule on health information allow me to participate in this survey?

Yes. The Privacy Rule permits you to make disclosures of protected health information without patient authorization for public health purposes or for research that has been approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This survey meets both of these criteria. Additionally, disclosures may be made under a data use agreement with NCHS. If you have questions about your rights as a respondent, you may call the IRB at 1-800-223-8118. The IRB is an independent board that protects the interests of people who take part in studies.