

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
about the Consumer Reporting System for Patient Safety**

**Here are some questions that other people have asked about the Consumer Reporting System. The answers might help you understand the system better.**

**What is the Consumer Reporting System for?** The purpose of this system is to make health care better by making it safer. It is a new system and researchers are testing it now in your town and in other towns in the United States. We refer to “Consumers” as people who use health care services. They are people like you and your family and friends. Here is how it works: You and other consumers will tell us about any health care safety concerns you have. Researchers will then look at the safety concerns you report to see how doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other health care providers need to make changes that will make health care safer. Also, if you would like, we give you the opportunity to share your report directly to your provider.

**What is a health care safety concern?** A safety concern is anything that happens with your doctor or hospital or pharmacy that worries you because you think it isn’t safe. It does not have to be something that resulted in harm. Or, maybe nothing bad happened but there was *almost* a mistake—we call this a “near miss.” For example, you may have a safety concern if you or a family member:

- Receive the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine
- Are mistaken for a different patient
- Get an infection after having an operation or other procedure
- Get the wrong diagnosis
- Have the wrong surgery performed

**What is a grievance?** The Consumer Reporting System does not record complaints about billing or insurance issues. We call these types of complaints “grievances.” These issues usually do not affect the safety of the health care you receive. However, if the complaint does relate to safety, it can be reported to the Consumer Reporting System. There is a reference page provided to you that lists the patient advocacy groups in your community as well as a list of a list of places that you can report such a complaints or grievances.

**What is a service complaint?** The Consumer Reporting System does not record complaints about parking, food, long wait times in the doctor’s office, etc. We call these types of complaints “service complaints.” These issues usually do not affect the safety of the health care you receive. However, if the complaint does relate to safety, it can be reported to the Consumer Reporting System. There is a reference page provided to you that lists the patient advocacy groups in your community as well as a list of a list of places that you can report such a complaint.

**What will you ask me to do?** If you agree to give us information about a safety concern, you can choose to talk on the telephone with a live person. Or you can fill out a form on your computer and send it over the Internet. It is private. Nobody will know if you participate. We will ask you if you or a family member have had safety concerns about your health care. If the answer is “Yes,” we will want to hear more. There are no right answers or wrong answers. We

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want to hear your opinions, and completing the questions should take about 15 minutes. You will be given the option to give us the contact information of any doctor, nurse, or other health care provider (or facility) that was involved in your concern. We will also give you the option to share your report with any doctor, nurse, or other health care provider (or facility) that was involved. You are able to choose to share a report without your name or one that includes your name. You can also choose to not provide any names or share your identity in any way. This would keep everything you say private.

**Who is developing the Consumer Reporting System for Patient Safety?** Several organizations that want to make health care better are working together on the new system. They are the RAND Corporation, ECRI Institute, a patient safety organization, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and Brigham and Women's Hospital. The United States federal government through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is paying for the system.

**How are people recruited or how do they find out about this reporting system?** The doctors, nurses, hospitals, and pharmacies in your town want to make health care safer. They are helping us advertise the new reporting system by sending out brochures and talking with patients. Or you may have picked up a notice or received one in the mail. The system has a web site and a free telephone number that people can call if they have questions. The system is private. You are given the option to give your name, but do not need to. Doctors, nurses, hospitals, and pharmacies will never know if you participate unless you want to tell them.

**Why should I participate?** You can share your experiences and help make health care safer for people in your town. We need to hear from many people. We need to hear about many health care experiences and concerns.

**What will I get if I help with the Consumer Reporting System?** You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to help. But your health care concerns will be part of the written report that will go to doctors, nurses, hospitals, and pharmacies. They will learn about all of the types of mistakes and have a chance to do better. All issues are written about together, no one individual story, mistake, or name is listed. Your story may help to make health care safer.

**What are the risks of reporting a concern through this system?** Your health and your family's health will not be at risk if you participate. Participation will not affect your health care or your health insurance. The Consumer Reporting System team will keep everything private. However, there is a small chance that something you say might become part of a report that the public reads. Your name will not be in the report, but do not share anything that would make you feel funny if the public read about it. We also suggest that you fill out the report, or talk to us on the phone in a place where you have privacy.

**Do I have to participate?** No. You do not have to participate. If you choose to participate, you can stop at any time. Some of the questions might make you feel upset. You do not have to answer all the questions.

**What happens to my doctor, nurse, hospital or pharmacy if I submit a Consumer Reporting System form about my safety concern involving them?** All of the health care

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concerns will be part of the written report that will go to doctors, nurses, hospitals, and pharmacies. They will learn about all of the types of mistakes and have a chance to do better. All issues are written about together, no one individual story, mistake, or name is listed. Your story may help to make health care safer. If you agreed to share your report to your provider, then we will do so; if you did not agree to share your report, then your doctor, nurse, hospital or pharmacy will only receive the large report. If you agreed to have us locate the information that your doctor, hospital or pharmacy may already have on record about your concern, we will do so in a way that does not reveal who you are. We will be asking for all concerns over several months that includes the month of your concern.

**How will you protect my privacy?** We will give your report a number. We will not use your name or addresses or any other personal information. All of the reports are kept in locked file cabinets or on computers that are protected with passwords. Only a few people on the research team have access to the files and computers. Your doctors, hospitals, and pharmacists are not part of the research team and they will not see the information you give us.

The federal agency that supports the research (AHRQ) has strict laws about patients' privacy. We cannot use the information for another project unless we ask your permission first. If you have questions about privacy, please call this telephone number: 1-800-447-2631 extension 4772.

**Why are you taping the reports made by phone?** If you talk to us by telephone, we will use a tape recorder for note taking purposes only to make sure that we capture everything you say correctly. The research team will listen to the tapes. They will type the information into the computer and then they will destroy the tapes.

**Will my report be secure when submitted over the internet?** If you fill out the form on your computer and send it to us, the report will go through a special internet connection to make sure the report stays private. The information will be encrypted through Secure Socket Layer (SSL) using at least 128-bit encryption. We can tell you more about this and answer your questions when we talk with you further.

**What browser and technical requirements are needed to use the online Consumer Reporting System form?** You will need the Internet Explorer browser. The form will work with the current version (Version 9) and the previous version (Version 8) of Internet Explorer. If you decide to save/print your report, you will need to use the current version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you have an old version of Adobe, you can get the current version from the Adobe website. Please note that if you use a different browser it may be hard to use and submit the form.

**Where are the instructions for completing the form?** If you use the form on your computer, you will see that it has instructions with it. Other instructions will "pop up" on your computer screen as you go through the form. Or you can call 1-800-XXX-XXXX. A live person will help you with the questions. The person will speak both English and Spanish and will write down your answers on a form.

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**Who can I call if I have technical difficulties submitting the form?** If you have questions or difficulties submitting the form, please call this telephone number: 1-800-XXX-XXXX extension XXXX. A live person will help you with the questions. Or if you need to speak to someone who can speak both English and Spanish, you can call 1-800-XXX-XXXX.

**Will I be able to print my form or save it on my own computer?** Yes. When you send the form to us through the Internet, you can choose to look at your report, print it, and save it as a PDF document on your computer. If you have only the Acrobat Reader application, you will not be able to save the document. However, you can view it and print a copy.

**Can I submit other documents using this online reporting form?** No. When you send the report to us through the Internet, you cannot attach and submit other documents. If you have text in another document that you want to include on your Consumer Reporting System form, you might be able to copy the text and then paste it into the form.

**How will I know that my report has been received?** You will see a message on your computer screen telling you that we have received your report. If you do not, call us at 1-800-XXX-XXXX and we can check to see if your report has been received.

**What if I want more information?** If you want to know more, call Dr. Denise Quigley at the RAND Corporation. Her phone number is 1-800-447-2631, extension 7549.

**What if I want to tell a different organization about my health care safety concerns?** Other groups also are working to make health care safer for patients. There is a reference page provided on the home page of the website that lists the patient advocacy groups in your community as well as a list of a list of places that you can report such a complaint. If you have trouble locating the list, please call Dr. Denise Quigley at the RAND Corporation. Her phone number is 1-800-447-2631, extension 7549. She can provide you with the list of organizations.