

Quality Counts

Arizona Nursing Home Quality Initiative

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What's New

CMS Open Door Forum

The next CMS Skilled Nursing Facility/ Long-Term Care (SNF/LTC) Open Door Forum is scheduled for Thursday, May 22.

Visit www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums/25_ODF_SNFLTC.asp for more information.

Critical New Information Added to *Nursing Home Compare* Web Site

Multi-year plan for improved nursing home quality also released

Medicaid beneficiaries and families searching for top quality long-term care services can find critical new information added to the Centers for Medicare & Medicare Services' (CMS') *Nursing Home Compare* Web site.

For the first time, information about nursing homes on the *Compare* Web site will list whether a home is or has been on CMS' special focus facility (SFF) list. The agency's SFF initiative gives heightened scrutiny to nursing homes that have a history of poor performance or repeated violations of state and federal health and safety rules.

"This expansion of information on *Nursing Home Compare* will give beneficiaries a more complete picture of a nursing home's history of providing quality care," CMS Acting Administrator Kerry Weems said.

The SFF initiative was created because a number of facilities were consistently providing poor quality care, yet were periodically instituting enough improvement that they would pass one survey only to fail the next (for many of the same problems as before). Such facilities with a "yo-yo" compliance history rarely addressed underlying

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Study Finds Increases in Nursing Home Costs

According to a study released by Genworth Financial, costs for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and some in-home care services have increased for a fifth consecutive year and might continue to increase as a result of an expected shortage of long-term health care workers.

For more information and to read the entire article, please visit <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/105916.php>.

systematic problems that were giving rise to repeated cycles of serious deficiencies.

In November 2007, the agency began publishing a list of Medicare- and Medicaid-participating nursing homes that had a history of serious quality-of-care problems and had failed to show significant improvement. In February 2008, CMS took the next step and published an updated, expanded list of nursing homes in the SFF initiative and included the category they fell within such as new additions, not improved, improving, recently graduated, or no longer in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

As of April 2008, there were 134 SFFs, out of about 16,000 active nursing homes. CMS works closely with states to select participants; as homes improve their quality of care and “graduate” from the pro-

gram—or fail to improve and are terminated from Medicare and Medicaid—new homes are added to the list. This movement of homes off the list allows more facilities with problems to be added as the program continues.

Once a facility is selected as an SFF, the state survey agency conducts twice the number of standard surveys and applies progressive enforcement until the nursing home either (a) significantly improves and graduates from the SFF initiative, (b) is granted additional time due to promising developments, or (c) is terminated from Medicare and/or Medicaid. CMS and the state can more quickly terminate a facility that is placing residents in immediate jeopardy.

Nursing homes that have the SFF designation, including information about that designation, will now be noted on *Nursing Home Compare*, which can be accessed at <http://www.medicare.gov>. The Web site helps families find nursing homes in their area. Information about the homes includes performance scores on quality measures, staffing information, and a three-year history of the home’s health, safety, and fire inspection reports. The Web site will be updated with new information quarterly.

“These actions are the next step in our commitment to bring transparency and accountability to the process families must go through to find the care that is best for them and their family member,” Weems said.

Further actions planned

The publication of the SFF list was the first major step in CMS’ latest efforts to improve nursing home care. A comprehensive, multi-year look at future actions the agency will take was also released recently.

The “2008 Action Plan for Further Improvement of Nursing Home Quality” consists of several inter-related and coordinated approaches:

- **Consumer Awareness and Assistance:** to include an increasing array of information about long-term care that will be written in an easy-to-understand

Upcoming Events

Arizona Health Care Association (AHCA) Educational Offering “How Admitting, Nursing, and Billing Staff Impact Your Pharmacy Bill”

Presenter: Sandy Brownstein

Wednesday, May 21, 2008, from 9 to 11 a.m.

Life Care Center of Paradise Valley

For registration information, please contact John Linda at 602.265.5331 or johnlinda@azhca.org.

Training for the Preparation of the Skilled Nursing Facility Uniform Accounting Report (SNF UAR)

Presented by AHCA

Thursday, June 5, 2008, from 9 to 11 a.m.

For registration information, please contact John Linda at 602.265.5331 or johnlinda@azhca.org.

AHCA 2008 Annual Conference & Trade Show

August 26–28, 2008

Renaissance Glendale Hotel & Spa

For registration information, please visit <http://www.azhca.org>.

format and available to the public at <http://www.medicare.gov>. Already posted there is the “Guide to Nursing Homes” and the “Compare” data. These tools can be used by Medicare beneficiaries and their family members to better understand the quality and value of Medicare’s nursing home benefit.

- **Survey, Standards, and Enforcement Improvement:** several initiatives are being developed to improve the effectiveness of the annual nursing home surveys, as well as those prompted by consumer complaints. The agency also plans to work in partnership with states to improve current enforcement efforts.

Join a Webinar on Nursing Home Culture Change

On May 19, the Picker/Commonwealth Fund Quality of Care for Frail Elders Program and the Pioneer Network will cohost an online meeting, “Culture Change in Nursing Homes: How Far Have We Come?”

Commonwealth Fund Assistant Vice President Mary Jane Koren, MD, MPH, will moderate the event. Michelle Doty, PhD, the Fund’s Associate Director of Research, will present the findings of The Commonwealth Fund 2007 Survey of Nursing Homes, which was released May 9.

Presenters Bonnie Kantor, ScD, Executive Director of the Pioneer Network, and Karen C. Schoeneman, MPA, CMS Project Officer for the Division of Nursing Homes, will help assess ongoing efforts to spread resident-centered care or “culture change” within the nursing home industry.

To register for this event, which will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. EST, go to <https://commonwealthfund.webex.com/commonwealthfund/onstage/g.php?d=559115991&t=a>.

Participants will be able to see the presenters’ PowerPoint presentations and listen to the presentations through their computer by dialing 1.888.278.5522. The participant passcode is 338 433 71. The dial-in information will also appear on the screen.

- **Quality Improvement:** the agency is focusing on several key areas to improve health care quality in nursing homes, including a special focus from the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) program on prevention of bed sores, reduction in the use of physical restraints, and greater emphasis on developing individualized care plans to improve a resident’s quality of life.
- **Quality Through Partnerships:** through its QIOs, CMS has coordinated an unprecedented, collaborative campaign, “Advancing Excellence in America’s Nursing Homes,” designed to improve both the delivery and measurement of quality care. Through its work with QIOs, state survey agencies, the nursing home industry, and consumers, CMS is well on track to achieve these goals.

A copy of the full 2008 nursing home action plan can be found at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CertificationandCompliance/12_NHs.asp.

Views on Health Care Delivery System Reform

Significant improvements in the quality of health care and the way it is delivered to patients will require organizational changes in our health system, say experts responding to the latest Commonwealth Fund and *Modern Healthcare* Opinion Leaders Survey. Nearly nine in ten survey respondents agree on the need for fundamental change. All of the experts agreed that some changes were needed, and only 8 percent said modest changes to the system would be enough.

Favored policy strategies for reform included strengthening the primary care system, encouraging care coordination, and promoting care management of high-cost patients with complex conditions. Opinion leaders also cite payment reform as an important strategy to enhance primary care physicians’ ability to provide coordinated, high-quality care, as well as to help prevent costly hospitalizations.

For more information and to read the entire article, please visit http://www.commonwealthfund.org/surveys/surveys_show.htm?doc_id=678193.

Generations Split on Medicare

In an interview with the *Washington Times*, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary Mike Leavitt said he is concerned that rising Medicare spending could divide the U.S. along generational lines.

“The kind of division I worry about is when we begin to see one generation pitted against another or when you begin to see economic classes pitted against each other. Those are the kinds of divisions that have classically divided and undermined nations,” he said.

With increasing health costs and the number of baby boomers due to enroll in Medicare, Leavitt also said the program “will price an emerging generation out of the capacity to do all the things we take for granted. And the reason is because they will be paying for health care.”

Mike Leavitt, now in his third year as DHHS Secretary, said Medicare’s mounting costs must be addressed by future leaders.

For more information, and to read the entire article, please visit <http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20080425/NATION/694631408/1002>.

Technical Assistance Teleconference on Consistent Assignment

The *Advancing Excellence in America’s Nursing Homes* National Campaign is hosting a technical assistance teleconference, titled “Consistent Assignment—The Practice and the Experience,” on Tuesday, June 3, at 11:00 a.m. Arizona time. (call-in begins at 10:45 a.m.).

Where?

Bring a cup of coffee to your nursing home’s conference room. Use a telephone line and follow along with handouts or follow along on your computer.

Who?

All nursing staff—DONs, ADONs, CNAs, all administrators

Registration

Go to <http://www.directeventreg.com/registration/event/44387623> by May 29 to register. You may also call 1.888.869.1189 and tell the operator you want to register for conference ID# 44387623.

Handouts

To download the presentation, visit www.nhqualitycampaign.org after May 23.

For more information and to download registration information, <http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org/files/WebinarConsistentAssignmentFlyer042108.pdf>.

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