

Quality Counts

Arizona Home Health Quality Initiative

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What's New

Medicare Beneficiary Appeal Rights

All Medicare beneficiaries have the right to appeal their discharge from a hospital, skilled nursing facility, home health agency, or comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facility.

For more information, go to <http://www.hsag.com/azmedicare> or call 1.800.359.9909.

SBAR Success

How agency staff worked together to implement better communication

During a recent HSAG-hosted teleconference, Assisted Healthcare Services Home Care staff described the success they had in rolling out the Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendation (SBAR) communication technique at their agency.

The technique, initially introduced to staff by HSAG during an on-site visit, was used to address barriers faced by agency nurses when communicating with physicians. Assisted Healthcare Services staff were empowered to incorporate SBAR in clinical processes, which resulted in the creation of two forms:

1. [Orders/Communication Form](#)—this form contains information used to communicate patient needs and secure physician orders.
2. [Communication/SOC Report/Weekend Report/Request](#)—this form is used for staff-to-staff communications.

These forms, now universally used at the agency's multiple locations, have improved staff-to-physician and staff-to-staff communication.

Assisted Healthcare Services plans to measure success of the forms by adding a question to their monthly pilot audit and looking for field use of the Orders/Communication Form.

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Save the Date!

Register for HSAG's Home Health Keys For Success Learning Session

Tuesday, February 27

8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

[Click here](#) to print the registration form, or visit <http://hhqi.hsag.com/events.asp> for more information.

Assisted Healthcare Services has agreed to share these forms with other agencies. To download these forms, please click on the links in the article above or contact Caralyn Williams or Pam Sensky at HSAG.

Embrace Quality Improvement, Transform Culture

HSAG encourages home health agencies to embrace quality improvement (QI) strategies as key elements in transforming organizational culture and creating a foundation that will help meet upcoming challenges, such as pay for performance. Leadership is called upon to support the development of high-performing, patient-centered teams that will focus on QI.

How leadership can impact and sustain QI

- **Modeling the way** to achieve set goals by doing what you say you will do and setting examples that are clear and realistic to staff members.
- **Inspiring a shared vision** by communicating to staff the exciting possibilities and opportunities the future holds. Awareness of the vision is the first step toward change before you can determine where you would like to be. Communicate this common vision in an attractive and appealing way.
- **Challenging and creating new processes** to bring about cultural change by enlisting others to share a common goal and engaging the team in discussions to review new opportunities for change, growth, and improvement.

CMS Open Door Forum

The next CMS Home Health, Hospice & DME Open Door Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, March 14.

These forums address issues related to home health PPS, the newly proposed competitive bidding for DME, and the Medicare hospice benefit. Many issues covered bridge concerns within all these settings.

Visit http://www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums/17_ODF_HHDME.asp for more information.

- **Enabling others** to act fosters collaboration and promotes cooperative goals for building trust and empowerment within the organization.
- **Encouraging and rewarding the team** gives the agency the opportunity to recognize individual contributions, show appreciation for excellence, and celebrate accomplishments toward QI.

Over the past few years, organizational culture has been defined as both a barrier and a key to success in accelerating and sustaining QI. HSAG encourages agency leadership to develop, support, and monitor the above processes in an effort to impact QI .

For more information on creating a patient-centered organizational structure, workforce, and environment to empower leaders and staff, visit MedQIC and view the section on [Leadership Tools and Resources](#).

Telehealth Update

Over 553 home health agencies nationwide have elected to work with their Quality Improvement Organization (QIO—HSAG is Arizona’s QIO) in an effort to address systems improvement through the use of telehealth. Phone monitoring has been selected for implementation by 62 percent of these agencies. Patients assessed as being at high risk for hospitalization have been targeted for either phone monitoring or telemonitoring by 339 of these agencies.

The American Telemedicine Association is offering an online certification training course in home telehealth. The self-learning modules focus on home telehealth applications and address clinical, administrative, financial, and legislative issues related to implementing and sustaining successful home telehealth programs. This beginner-level course helps novice learners understand these concepts; however, it also serves as a review for intermediate and advanced learners in meeting educational or competency requirements.

For more information, visit <http://www.atmeda.org/courses/LessonInfo.asp>.

Become a STAR Home Health Agency

Set targets-achieve results

All home health agencies (HHAs) have the opportunity to register and use the STAR Web site to view all of their publicly reported measure scores and set targets toward achieving high-quality outcomes.

The data on STAR is publicly reported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and found on Home Health Compare. The quality measures are derived from the OASIS data set. STAR also provides agencies with data comparison charts, graphs of agency scores, and state and national averages for publicly reported measures.

Immunization Assessment

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, influenza affects 5 to 20 percent of the population and causes 200,000 hospitalizations every year. Pneumonia accounts for 175,000 hospitalizations per year with 5 to 7 percent of the cases ending in fatalities. In addition, influenza and pneumonia can exacerbate chronic illness in the frail elderly, resulting in avoidable acute care hospitalizations. Since many of these patients are referred to home care, the home health industry provides the perfect venue to assess patient needs and provide the necessary follow-up for immunization and the prevention of avoidable hospitalizations.

Home health agencies should be assessing their patients for immunization status, determining which patients need to be immunized, and ensuring that all of the agency's eligible patients get both influenza and pneumococcal vaccines.

Does your agency have a tracking process in place to ensure that each eligible patient who desires the influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations receives them? Do patients know where to go to get the vaccines?

Agencies are encouraged to work with HSAG to increase immunization rates and keep patients healthy. Don't let your patients become a statistic. Ensure that they are immunized. It's the right thing to do!

In addition, STAR includes an outline for understanding OASIS questions, including definitions of measures, assessment strategies, and CMS OASIS questions and answers.

If you are already registered on STAR

For agencies already registered on STAR, now is the time to review your Plan of Action (POA) and refresh your goals. Start by taking a look at your current POA and comparing it to the goals you currently have set on STAR. Do you need to update or realign your targets? If so, simply go to My Target Setting and enter new values for the publicly reported measures you are currently measuring. You will most likely need to update and revise your POA as well. Remember, your POA is a living, working document.

If you have not yet registered on STAR

For agencies that have not registered on STAR, you will need to set up an account. Follow these steps to register and start using STAR today.

1. Call HSAG's Colleen Angotti at 602.745.6295 for your agency's key/password.
2. Go to <http://hhqi-star.org> and enter your key/password to create your account. Have your Medicare provider number available as well. (Once your account has been created, you will be prompted to set your own ID and password.)
3. Set your targets!

Your registration is completely confidential and will not be shared with CMS or the state survey agency. HSAG has access to the STAR Web site to assist you with any questions.

HSAG is encouraging all Arizona HHAs to register on STAR and use this resource. Agencies already using the site find it not only time saving, but extremely useful in their quality improvement efforts.

Please call Caralyn Williams or Pam Sensky if you have questions or need more information on STAR.

Don't wait, become a STAR agency today!

NPI: Get it. Use it. Share it.

Will you be ready to use your National Provider Identifier (NPI)? Time is running out! Failure to prepare could result in a disruption of cash flow.

To date, over 1.6 million providers have obtained an NPI. Now only 98 days remain to implement the NPI into business practices prior to the compliance date. A recent survey of the health care industry conducted by the Workgroup for Electronic Data Interchange indicated that providers should have obtained an NPI and should now be focusing on implementation and testing with health plans and clearinghouses.

If you have not obtained your NPI, you should do so immediately so that you can begin the implementation and testing process.

To apply for an NPI, visit <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov> or call the NPI enumerartor to request a paper application at 1.800.465.3203.

For more information and education, visit the CMS Web site at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvI-identStand>.

Getting an NPI is free—not having one can be costly.

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

HHQI National Campaign Update

The Arizona Association for Home Care (AAHC) has become Arizona's Local Area Network for Excellence (LANE) for the 2007 Home Health Quality Improvement (HHQI) National Campaign. As a co-LANE, HSAG will actively support AAHC's efforts with the campaign and help disseminate information on recruitment and available resources.

The campaign is a grassroots collaborative quality improvement effort among home care leaders and quality improvement organizations. The campaign seeks to unite the home care community under the shared vision of reducing avoidable acute care hospitalizations to improve patient care. To date, over 45 percent of home health agencies nationwide have signed on as campaign participants.

The campaign will provide participants with free tools, resources, guidelines, success stories, best practice education materials, and data to support improving patient care quality. This will be accomplished by electronic distribution of monthly best practice [intervention packages](#) to participating agencies.

Visit <http://www.homehealthquality.org> to register as a participant and join AAHC and HSAG in improving patient care quality and reducing avoidable hospitalizations.

HSAG Home Health Team Contact Information

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Visit HSAG's Home Health Quality Initiative (HHQI) Web site at <http://hhqi.hsag.com>

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