

Quality Counts

Arizona Home Health Quality Initiative

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What's New

2007 AAHC Annual Conference

Don't miss the Arizona Association for Home Care's (AAHC's) Annual Conference, "Healthcare is not an event . . . it is a journey," June 14–15 at the Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Resort.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.azhomecare.org/cde.cfm?event=160798>.

A Fresh Look at STAR

Now is the time for home health agencies registered on the Setting Targets-Achieving Results (STAR) Web site to refresh their targets. Take this time to evaluate processes and review goals to set new, achievable targets for your agency.

How does my agency refresh STAR targets?

To refresh your agency's targets, simply logon to the STAR Web site and go to your agency's home page where all 11 of your publicly reported outcome measures are displayed. Click on the "edit" link on the right side of the page and refresh your targets for any or all of your publicly reported measures.

If your agency has achieved its current targets, take the challenge to set new targets and look at different methods of target setting. Once you have made these decisions, simply **submit and save** the new information. If your current target is still appropriate, please **resubmit and save** your target again.

How often should my agency refresh STAR targets?

Agencies should use STAR as a guide to assess the quality of care they provide to patients on an ongoing basis. STAR is updated quarterly and follows the same schedule as *Home Health Compare*. Consider refreshing your agency's targets quarterly or as current targets are achieved.

What if my agency is not registered on STAR?

HSAG encourages all home health agencies to use STAR to improve health care quality. To register, simply follow the steps below:

- Obtain an initial ID Key (password) from HSAG.
- Go to <http://www.hhqi-star.org>.
- Enter your provider # and HSAG-provided password and create your agency profile.
- Change both your user ID and HSAG-provided password.
- Submit your profile information.

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Why should my agency use STAR?

High-quality home care begins with targets—your agency’s vision for the future. The STAR initiative has been designed to help home health agencies improve that care by setting achievable targets.

- The secure STAR Web site is available to all Medicare-certified home health agencies that have a computer and Internet access.
- STAR allows registered agencies to set targets for the 11 publicly reported measures—the same measures found on *Home Health Compare*.
- On the STAR Web site, agencies can view their trend report data and compare their performance to state and national peers while tracking their achievement of selected targets over time.
- On the STAR Web site, agencies can find Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)-approved OASIS data collection information that includes a question-and-answer section to instruct field staff on coding guidelines.

Immunization Assessment Survey

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) wants to know if your agency is assessing patients to see if they have or need both the influenza and pneumonia vaccines as part of your agency’s comprehensive assessment.

Check to make sure this is included as part of your comprehensive assessment and that agency staff are documenting the results and follow-up actions. Does your agency refer patients to their primary care physician or a local clinic? Does your agency provide these immunizations to all eligible patients that need and want the vaccinations?

HSAG will be conducting a survey in late summer on behalf of CMS as a remeasurement to a survey that was sent out in the fall of 2005.

Make sure you have your immunization assessment process in place by then to assure CMS that Arizona home health agencies are taking steps to protect our vulnerable elderly population from contracting the flu and pneumonia.

The STAR Web site is confidential and is not used by state surveyors or by CMS, and individual agency targets are not publicly reported. The site can be used to track an agency’s internal quality improvement processes by setting measurable goals with realistic timelines.

HHQI National Campaign Update

New BPIP now available

The third Best Practice Intervention Package—Medication Management—is now available for download by visiting <http://www.homehealthquality.org/hh/hha/interventionpackages/medmanagement.aspx>.

This package features the “Be Safe & Take” Clinician Enrichment Program. This educational program is designed for nurses and therapists, but there are also educational tracks designed for medical social workers and home health aides. The program includes pre- and post-test medication competency tests, educational materials, and national medication improvement tools.

In addition, a 15-minute WebEx presentation on the Medication Management BPIP is available on the campaign Web site to provide a quick overview of the package.

New agency-specific ACH Benchmark reports sent

HSAG has recently mailed the latest agency-specific acute care hospitalization (ACH) Benchmark reports to registered agencies. These reports contain information about your agency’s performance on the ACH measure—including your actual and risk-adjusted ACH rate for each rolling 12-month period since September 2006, as well as your statewide and national ACH percentile ranking.

In addition, you will also find a monthly breakdown of all inpatient hospitalizations (via transfer or discharge), beginning with OASIS assessments submitted by your agency in January 2007. The details include:

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- Your actual monthly hospitalization rate (from OASIS MO100 and MO855).
- Your rate of emergent, urgent, and elective hospitalizations (from OASIS MO890).
- Your rate by each reason for hospitalization (from OASIS MO895).
- Your rate of hospitalization by day of the week (from OASIS MO906).

Agencies nationwide have found this agency-specific data extremely helpful in identifying root causes for rising ACH rates. For example, if your agency's report shows that most of your hospitalizations occur on Fridays, your agency might consider phone monitoring on Wednesdays and Thursdays or looking at current Friday staffing numbers.

BPIP audio CDs now mailed quarterly

The first BPIP audio CD on hospitalization risk assessment was mailed to registered agencies individually in March, but the rest of the BPIP audio CDs will be mailed quarterly. The BPIPs for April (emergency care planning), May (Medication Management), and June (phone monitoring and frontloading visits) will all be on one audio CD and will be sent to registered agencies in late June or early July.

Medicare Appeals: Provider Information

To view HSAG's new Medicare provider Web page that contains updated information about fee-for-service and Medicare Advantage benefits, please visit <http://www.hsag.com/providers>.

The page contains information on:

- The beneficiary notices initiative (BNI).
- Managed care appeals and grievances.
- Sample notice forms (downloadable).
- The Federal Register (BIPA) Regulation.

HSAG handles appeals for beneficiaries who have traditional fee-for-service Medicare or Medicare Advantage.

The CDs—containing only the clinician audio—will be useful for new staff orientation or for information review by seasoned clinicians. Although these CD mailings will not correspond with the release of the BPIPs, the audio is available on the day of each BPIP release on the campaign Web site at <http://www.homehealthquality.org>. Feel free to create your own CDs by downloading the audio from the Web site. This can be done for clinicians and home health aides.

For agencies that have not yet registered for the campaign, please visit <http://www.homehealthquality.org/hh/involved/default.aspx>. For more information on the campaign, e-mail Keri Ruffell at the Arizona Association for Home Care at hhqi@azhomecare.org.

Medication Assessment Protocol

This protocol will provide a standardized approach to evaluating a patient's ability to administer medications.

Ask patients to demonstrate how they take their medication. Ask if patients have any help to prepare or select the appropriate medications.

- Observe the patient performing preparatory activities (gathering medication supplies or moving to an area where medications are routinely stored/organized).
- Is the process organized?
- Identify if compliance aids are used.
- If the patient does have assistance, determine (through observation and interview) if the assistance is *necessary*.

Once the medication supplies are assembled (or assessed), ask patients to describe how they would proceed with taking their medications (i.e., ask specifically, "What would you do first? Second?" Etc.).

- Is the process appropriate as described?
- Are the dosages, times, and frequencies of medications correct?
- Check the patient's response against the directions for specific medications.

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If the ability to sequence the multi-step medication administration task is not evident, ask the patient to demonstrate a multi-step medication administration task. (E.g., “Please show me how you would open your medicine bottles and take your medications.”)

- Do patients demonstrate the ability to appropriately complete all steps in the task?
- Do they select the appropriate bottles?
- Do they open each one and select the correct dosage prior to closing the lids?
- Do they take the medication as directed?
- Do they close the lids and return the bottles to the storage area?

Check adherence as part of the comprehensive assessment AND on an ongoing basis.

- Review calendar, diary, list, pillbox, etc. to determine compliance.
- Select one medication with a known start date and count pills to verify compliance.
- Does the patient have any established daily routines which are, or could be, tied into medication administration?

Source: QMAP Best Practice Tools.

May 23 Home Health Open Door Forum

Due to the recent publication of the Home Health PPS Refinement and Rate Update for CY 2008 NPRM, the date of the next Home Health, Hospice, and DME Open Door Forum has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 23 at 2:00 p.m. EST. During this call, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will discuss the major provisions of the proposed refinements to home health PPS.

The Home Health PPS Refinement and Rate Update for CY 2008 NPRM was published in the *Federal Register* on May 4. One of the primary goals of the ODF is general outreach. Because CMS is in the early stages of the rule-making process and is considering the many forthcoming written public comments, they are not supplying any final policy information during the forum.

The forum does not replace the public comment process discussed in the proposed rule. Any comment on this regulation needs to be provided as outlined in the *Federal Register* by the close of the comment period.

To participate, dial 1.800.837.1935 and reference conference ID 4775216.

An audio recording of the call can be accessed by dialing 1.800.642.1687 and entering the conference ID beginning two hours after the original conference has ended. The recording will expire after three business days.

Visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums> for more information.

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

This material was prepared by Health Services Advisory Group, Inc. (HSAG), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Arizona, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy.