

Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

Ref: S&C-06-11

DATE: March 10, 2006

TO: State Survey Agency Directors

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: **Nursing Homes** - Issuance of Revised Surveyor Guidance for Quality Assessment and Assurance (Tags F520 and F521) as Part of Appendix PP, State Operations Manual, and Training Materials

Letter Summary

- Revised guidance for long-term care surveyors regarding Quality Assurance and Assessment (QAA) condenses Tags F520 and F521 into one tag, F520, and will be effective June 1, 2006.
- System changes in preparation for these revisions will be effective April 3, 2006.
- An advance copy of this guidance and training materials are attached.
- This training packet is to be utilized in assuring that all surveyors who survey nursing homes are trained in the revised guidance by the implementation date.

Revised surveyor guidance for surveying QAA requirements in long-term care facilities will become effective on April 3, 2006. At that time, a final copy of this new guidance will be available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/> and ultimately incorporated into Appendix PP of the State Operations Manual. (Note: System changes in preparation for these revisions will be effective April 3, 2006)

We are providing an advance copy of the revised guidance, which contains interpretive guidelines, an investigative protocol, and deficiency categorization. The interpretive guidelines clarify the QAA committee functions, i.e., committee composition and frequency of meetings, identification of quality deficiencies, development of action plans, and implementation of action plans and correction of identified quality deficiencies. The investigative protocol explains the objectives and procedures surveyors will need for their investigation. The deficiency categorization provides severity guidance for the determination of the correct level of severity of outcome to residents from deficiencies found at Tag F520.

Also attached to this memo are training materials for the revised Tag F520. This training packet is to be utilized in assuring that all surveyors who survey nursing homes are trained in this new guidance by the implementation date. These materials were presented and discussed in a teleconference with Regional Offices on February 15, 2006. We encourage training to be conducted in person with group discussion to optimize learning. However, if this is not feasible to meet the needs of your surveyors, it is acceptable to use other methods. The training materials may also be used to communicate with provider groups and other stakeholders.

RO training coordinators will document the completion of training on this new guidance for all RO and State nursing home surveyors within their region.

Enclosed with this memorandum are the following files:

- Guidance Training Instructor Guide – (pdf file);
- PowerPoint presentation file – (PowerPoint file); and
- Advance copy of Tag F520 Guidance – (Word file).

For questions on this memorandum, please contact Linda O'Hara at 410-786-8347 or via email at linda.ohara@cms.hhs.gov.

Effective Date: April 3, 2006. The State Agency should disseminate this information within 30 days of the date of this memorandum.

Training: The materials should be distributed immediately to all State Agencies and training coordinators.

/s/
Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management (G-5)

Enclosures: Advance copy of Tag F520
PowerPoint Presentation
Training Instructor Guide