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States Get Toolkit To Determine Compliance Of Settings In State Plan Amendments, Waivers, And Renewal Applications

Recently, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a toolkit to help states implement the final Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid regulations that became effective in March.

The toolkit is for states developing 1915 (c) waiver and 1915 (i) State Plan Amendments and renewal applications.

States can use the toolkit's five documents to determine which residence types or care settings are eligible to participate in HCBS.

According to the most current statistics available, more than 37 states use 1915 (c) HCBS waivers to cover services in residential or assisted living settings, and an additional 13 states use a Medicaid state plan for personal care or other state plan services, according to a 2009 Medicaid report.

The documents in the toolkit define and describe the qualities of HCBS settings. In addition, the setting must be based on the needs of the individual receiving HCBS services as indicated in the individual's person-centered service plan, according to CMS.

To find the toolkit, visit www.medicaid.gov/hcbs and look for "Settings Compliance Requirements Toolkit."

The toolkit consists of following documents:

- ◆ Settings Requirements Compliance Toolkit: Regulatory Requirements
- ◆ Incorporation of Heightened Scrutiny

Diagram In the Standard Waiver Process

- ◆ HCBS 1915 (c) Compliance Flow Chart
- ◆ Guidance on Settings That Have the Effect of Isolating Individuals Receiving HCBS From the Broader Community
- ◆ Exploratory Questions to Assist States in Assessment of Residential Settings

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Federal, State Lawmakers Attend Assisted Living Groundbreaking



From left to right: Massachusetts State Rep. John Fernandez, State Sen. Richard T. Moore, Frank Romano, owner/president of Essex Group Management and a member of the AHCA Board of Governors, and U.S. Representative Joseph Kennedy III officially breaking ground of an assisted living building on the Blaire House of Milford campus. See page 3 for more details.

Gratitude Practices Produce Close-Knit Team, Great Care, And Increased Census

The practice of gratitude among staff members is credited with elevating staff morale and increasing occupancy at Maple Pointe Assisted Living, located in Rockville Centre, N.Y., says its executive director. The Chelsea Senior Living community cares for people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

and residents, she learned how "disenchanted" they were with the residence. The building's census was below 80 percent.

Marshall thought, "Where do I start?"

"Gratitude and simple recognition have helped to bring us from a 69 percent staff turnover rate to a mere 18 percent."

—Tammy Marshall

team member for an act of kindness. For instance, the marketing director thanked the dining director for preparing and serving

the late afternoon sandwich when the marketing director had missed meal time.

After three years of maintaining that practice, "the weekly gratitude has become so important that if one of us has a day off, we text or email our gratitude so that it can be read aloud during the meeting," says Marshall.

Leadership Thanks Staff

In 2013, the leadership team began expressing its appreciation directly to staff.

"We decided to have every department head thank a member of the frontline staff," Marshall says. The staff member's supervisor expresses his or her appreciation but also

mentions that another member of the leadership team witnessed the staff member's act of kindness.

For instance, the maintenance director would tell a housekeeper that the recreation director was very appreciative for the housekeeper's help with cleanup after a messy craft session.

In this way, staff learn that they are appreciated by their supervisor but also by another member of the leadership team.



Maple Pointe Assisted Living in Rockville Centre, N.Y.

When Executive Director Tammy Marshall started in 2010, staff had just organized a union, and morale among the employees was low. The staff turnover rate for the previous two years was 69 percent.

Marshall describes the community's atmosphere when she began. "Walking through the halls, there was the intangible smog of negativity," she says. "Poor morale results in compromised care for residents." As she spoke to family members

Then she recalled the advice of a colleague: "Fix the staff, and everything else in your building will fall into place."

Leadership Team Starts Practice

Gratitude practices began after Marshall hired four department heads with experience in motivating and recognizing employees. She instituted "Thankful Thursdays" during the weekly team meeting. Each department head would thank another

“Gratitude is our culture, and we rarely let an act of kindness go without being recognized,” Marshall says.

To get residents involved in the gratitude culture, the community hung a large corkboard, called the Gratitude Board, in the main hallway. Nearby are index cards, push pins, and pens. Residents, family members, and volunteers are encouraged to write thank you’s and pin them to the board.

“This generates a sense of pride amongst the staff when they see their acts of kindness posted for all to view,” Marshall says.

More Occasions To Express Gratitude

Maple Pointe has also introduced gratitude into its monthly staff birthdays celebration. Everyone brings a dish, and the birthday cake always has the following inscription: “Happy Birthday and thank you for being here with us.” In addition, Marshall hand-writes a note expressing why the staff member is special and how those qualities contribute positively to the community.

And every day during November, a prominently displayed board presents the “Thank You of the Day.”

In addition, the department heads write a list of all the staff members who have earned their gratitude for the preceding year and then read their lists aloud to the group during a team meeting.

Gratitude Practices Yield Bonuses

Marshall is convinced that the gratitude campaign is paying off. Now, she reports, census ranges between 93 percent and 100 percent.

“We no longer struggle with census, and we maintain a harmonious relationship with the rarely seen union,” she says. “The care is phenomenal. Staff love the residents.

Additional Workforce Strategies Employed

- ◆ Company hires environmental services, recreation, and health services department heads.
- ◆ Department heads have experience in motivating, rewarding, and recognizing staff.
- ◆ Company encourages hiring staff members’ relatives.
- ◆ Leadership team agrees to hire new staff with personal qualities: kindness, respect, and warmth.
- ◆ Interviewing techniques focus on personal qualities rather than skills.



“Gratitude is our culture, and we rarely let an act of kindness go without being recognized.”

—Tammy Marshall

18 percent. I no longer have team members who look as if they want to be somewhere else.”

This June, the New York State Health Facilities Association/New York State Center for Assisted Living will award the 2014 Innovative Workforce Practice Award for

Gratitude and simple recognition have helped to bring us from a 69 percent staff turnover rate to a mere

Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention of the Year to Maple Point Assisted Living. ◆

Essex Group Expands Holdings With New Building On Blaire House Campus

The Rowley, Mass.-based Essex Group Management is constructing a 42-unit assisted living and memory care building on the Blaire House of Milford campus. Left to right:



Frank Romano, owner/president Essex Group Management, Travis Romano, Essex Group’s assistant general counsel, U.S. Rep. Joseph Kennedy III, and Kyle Romano, executive director of the Blaire House of Milford’s skilled nursing center.

Data Trend: Most Assisted Living Staff Believe Management Cares

Which employees in assisted living communities believe that management cares? By looking at the comparative scores in the graphic below provided by National Research Corporation, one can see how different employee groups respond to the question: “How community management cares about employees?” in the 2013 and 2012 employee satisfaction surveys. In 2013, employees rated management higher or remained steady, compared with 2012 results, according to National Research.

Overall, more than 70 percent of employees surveyed provided positive feedback that management cares. However, there is variability ranging from 70 percent for nursing and per-

sonal care—the largest group for this analysis—to 84 percent for business management positions, one of the smallest groups of employees.

National Research believes these trends reinforce the idea that different types of employees respond to different forms of communication and engagement activities. Every group has unique needs. Management needs to be thoughtful in providing different approaches across the board, according to the company.

National Research suggests that assisted living communities looking to improve their “management cares” ratings should focus on the largest employee group—nurses and personal care staff—with the lowest ratings because it will increase scores

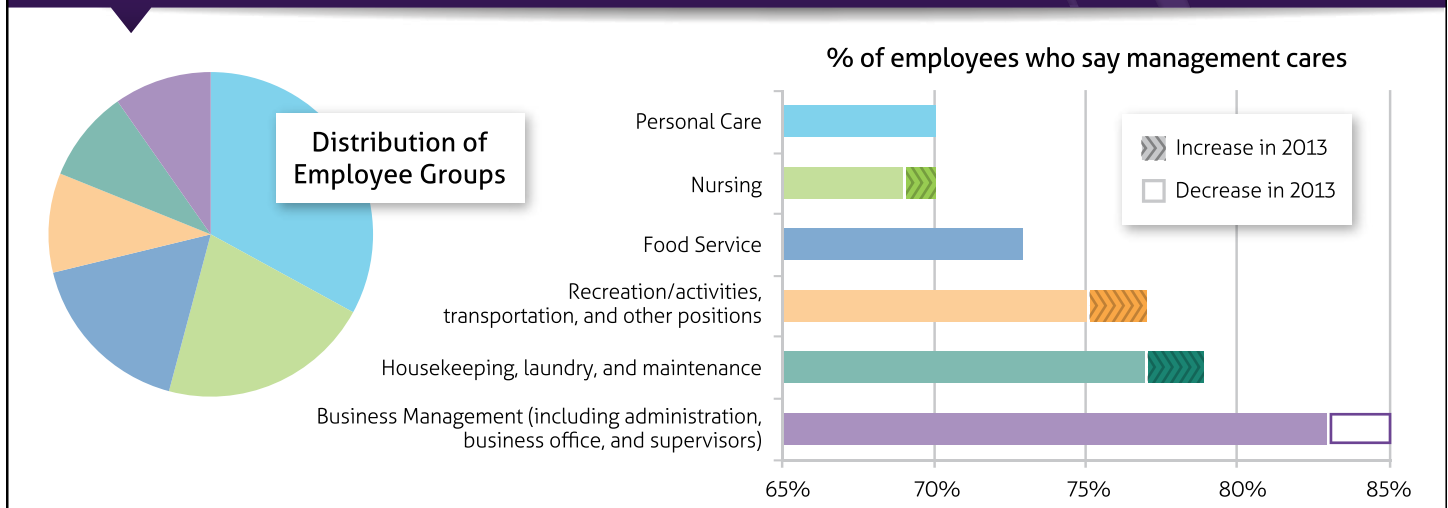
faster. Combined nurses and personal care staff constitute more than half the employees surveyed. In addition, staff stability among direct care employees is most important because of its impact on quality of care and customer satisfaction, National Research says.

How does management approach employee engagement? Is it trying to engage all groups in the same way or individually?

National Research supports the NCAL Quality Initiative through its My InnerView products.

Join the national assisted living database. Improvement starts here. Contact National Research to participate at (800) 601-3884 or info@nationalresearch.com. ♦

Which Employees Believe Management Cares?



Based on “Excellent” & “Good” responses from assisted living employees when asked to rate “How community management cares about employees.”
Source: My InnerView Assisted Living Employee surveys collected in 2012 and 2013 by National Research Corporation

My InnerView by



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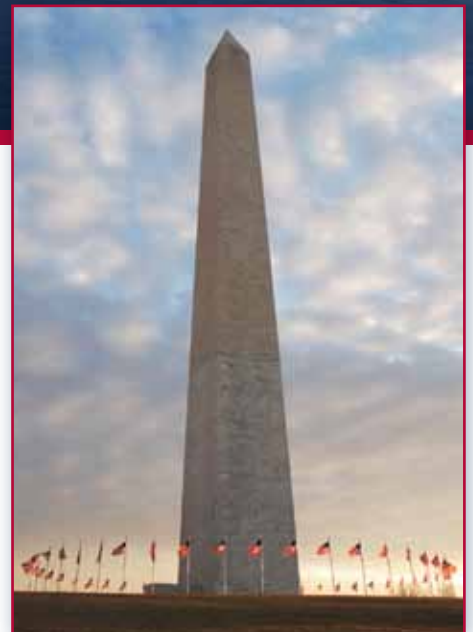
Registration is now open!

The AHCA/NCAL 65th Annual Convention & Expo will be held at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center. Overlooking the Potomac River and just minutes from DC, this venue has it all—a 19-story glass atrium, dining, shopping, entertainment, nightlife, and access to national attractions. Don't miss it!

AHCAconvention.org

NCALconvention.org

Early bird registration deadline is July 18th.



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CMS Toolkit continued from page 1

Document descriptions follow.

Settings Requirements

The “Settings Requirements Compliance Toolkit: Regulatory Requirements” contains the qualities and conditions required for settings to be “fully compliant.” The final section describes “Settings That are Presumed to Have the Qualities of an Institution.”

Heightened Scrutiny In the Waiver Process

The “Incorporation of Heightened Scrutiny Diagram in the Standard Waiver Process” is a document that illustrates the state’s development of a 1915 (c) or 1915 (i) application to CMS and when “heightened scrutiny” is applied to settings. Heightened scrutiny is applied to settings “presumed” institutional.

Compliance Flow Chart

The “HCBS 1915 (c) Compliance Flow Chart” applies to both the 1915 (c) waiver program and the 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment. This document diagrams the steps involved in assuring that settings are compliant with the HCBS final regulation.

Note that any “substantive changes in a state’s 1915 (c) HCBS Waiver Transition Plan” will require public comment. Under the final rule, there is a provision requiring states offering HCBS under existing state plans or waivers to develop transition plans to ensure that HCBS settings will meet final rule’s requirements, according to CMS.

Guidance On Settings

The “Guidance on Settings That Have the Effect of Isolating Individuals Receiving HCBS from the Broader Community” provides further guidance on those settings that are presumed to be institutional and/or isolate individuals from accessing the surrounding community.

For assisted living providers with residents suffering from specific diseases, such as dementia, this document provides further clarification. The guidance document states that settings that “have the following two characteristics alone might, but will not necessarily, meet the criteria for having the effect of isolating individuals:”

- ◆ “The setting is designed specifically for people

with disabilities, and often even for people with a certain type of disability.”

◆ “The individuals in the setting are primarily or exclusively people with disabilities, and on-site staff provide many services to them.”

“These two characteristics provide some flexibility for disease and disability-specific communities, so long as they meet additional criteria,” said Mike Cheek, AHCA/NCAL senior vice president of Medicaid and long term care policy.

The document also includes a “non-exhaustive list” of examples and descriptions of the settings that isolate individuals from the greater community. The examples are:

- ◆ Farmstead or disability-specific farm community
- ◆ Gated/secured communities for people with disabilities
- ◆ Residential schools
- ◆ Multiple settings

Multiple settings are “usually for persons with disabilities that are co-located and operated by the same provider, but limit the individual with disabilities access to the larger community,” the document states.

Of note is CMS’ exclusion of Continuing Care Retirement Communities because some of the residents live independently and therefore “do not raise the same concerns around isolation,” according to the guidance document.

Exploratory Questions

While the “Exploratory Questions to Assist States in Assessment of Residential Settings” is a five-page “optional tool” provided to help states determine if characteristics of the HCBS rule are present in settings. It contains questions in 22 categories.

While the documents in this toolkit are meant for state officials, NCAL is discussing with CMS how this latest guidance will impact providers caring for people with Alzheimer’s disease.

“We need to understand the steps CMS will ask providers to take when restrictions on egress are in place to keep residents with dementia safe,” says David Kylo, NCAL’s executive director.

“We are seeking further clarification in this area.”

NCAL, along with AHCA, will keep members informed of any developments. ◆

Frequency Of Visitors' Visits Impacts Resident Recommendation Scores

Assisted living residents who have visitors more than once a month are more likely to recommend their assisted living communities than residents who have visitors less than once every three months, research shows.

"Survey data showed that more than one visit a month to residents in assisted living correlated with those residents being more than 90 percent likely to recommend their community for care," says Jason Stevens, National Research Corporation vice president.

To find this correlation, My InnerView by National Research categorized assisted living resident answers to the following questions: "Who visits you most often?" and "How often does this person visit you?" Data were categorized into the following groups: less than once a year, once a year, once every three months, once a week or more, once a month, and almost daily.

The results show an 11 percentage point increase in recommendation scores—from 80 percent to 91 percent—as the frequency of visits increase, according to National Research.

"By examining the influencing factors of recommendation among assisted living residents, an increase in visits draws a correlation to an increase in 'excellent' and 'good' recommendations of care," says Stevens.

National Research offers the following tips to assisted living communities.

- ◆ Compare resident recommendation scores against visitation frequency.
- ◆ Examine how your community is facilitating visits for residents.
- ◆ Explore technological options that keep residents connected, such as video chat.
- ◆ Consider piloting 24/7 visiting hours to increase resident satisfaction.
- ◆ Offer additional support for residents who are visited less frequently.

National Research suggests communities think of new ways to encourage visits from other populations, such as securing discounts at nearby hotels and making visitors feel more welcome. ◆

New Construction Down In First Quarter 2014; Other Key Indicators Steady

Construction of new assisted living units nationwide registered its lowest point in more than four years during first quarter 2014, according to the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing and Care Industries (NIC), Annapolis, Md.

"[This was] the lowest number of units starting construction within assisted living properties of any quarter during the past four-and-a-half years," said Chuck Harry, NIC's managing director and director of research and analytics.

Other key financial indicators for the industry were steady. The national occupancy rate for assisted living properties during first quarter 2014 was 89.1 percent, 2.4 percentage points above its cyclical low and a 0.1 percentage point decrease from fourth quarter 2013, according to the NIC statement.

The annual asking rent growth for assisted living was

2.1 percent, higher than independent living at 1.4 percent, said Beth Mace, NIC's new chief economist. "Rent growth for both sectors exceeded the estimated increase in costs for wages and food," she added.

During fourth quarter 2013, NIC began to notice a slowdown in construction. In a statement, Harry said, "Construction activity during the fourth quarter moderated slightly, in part due to a modest decline in the construction starts."

Of those 10,750 units starting construction in first quarter 2014, a majority (7,909 units) were being built in assisted living buildings that will have the combination of assisted living and memory care services and continuing care retirement communities. A total of 1,550 units were being built within freestanding memory care communities. Another 1,291 units were built in freestanding assisted living, according to NIC. ◆

Don't Forget! June 2 Is Deadline For NCAL Board Candidate Materials

NCAL is accepting applications from members in good standing who are interested in becoming candidates for the organization's Board of Directors. Members need to submit their applications by Monday, June 2.

NCAL's elections are for the following positions:

- ◆ NCAL Chair
- ◆ NCAL Vice Chair
- ◆ NCAL Secretary/Treasurer
- ◆ Seven At-Large Representatives

Officers are elected to one-year terms, and At-Large Board Representatives serve two-year terms.

Candidacy applications and materials are available at <http://bit.ly/1jVZcXI>. NCAL candidates should submit their application materials by email to David Kylo at dkylo@ncal.org or Martece Yates at myates@ncal.org.

Call Kylo at (202) 898-6312 if you have additional questions. ◆

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