



THE ADVOCATE OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT
SERVICES FOR OLDER OHIOANS

Five Star Ratings Released to Media; Facility Rating Information Population under Way December 19, 2008

Beginning December 15, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) began "populating" facilities' MDS mailboxes with respective "5 Star Rankings." Facilities will only be able to receive/view their own ranking at this point and it may take 2-3 days for the information to be received by all facilities. Facilities will also receive an explanation of the rankings and a toll free number – (800) 839-9290 - for technical assistance. The system will go "live" December 18 on the Nursing Home Compare Website in addition to a press conference.

An unfortunate note to all of this is that CMS released the national list of rankings to the media earlier in the week but not to the provider associations. Not surprisingly, this is fostering media calls to facilities across the country as well as to AAHSA and state affiliates such as AOPHA. We are working with AAHSA in responding to any media inquiries, so if you are contacted, touch base with us and we will help formulate a response or you can use these preliminary talking points in any response:

- There should be two types of nursing homes: the excellent and the non-existent. Quality should be an automatic public expectation.
- Providers support a consumer-friendly nursing home rating system based on reliable quality information that the public can understand; unfortunately, the five-star rating system is a great idea prematurely implemented.
- Together, government and providers must be responsible, transparent and accountable for taking care of vulnerable seniors. CMS has key responsibility for defining, measuring and overseeing quality while providers have the key responsibility in delivering quality. Data provided by the government must be accurate, reliable, timely and friendly.
- The rating system is based on three pillars:
 1. Clinical measures: Clinical measures are the most mature data collected;
 2. Staffing: The staffing component is a snapshot and requires much immediate work because staffing is the best proxy for quality;
 3. Inspections: Inspection data is inconsistent.
- What needs to be improved about the Five-Star Rating system is:
 - Immediate development of a data collection tool around staffing.
 - Coordination of the rating system with the Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes campaign.
 - Overhaul of the survey and certification system with funding provided for a new system.
 - Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement that flow through directly for care giving; the dollars follow the caregiver should be the mantra.
- CMS and providers need to provide guidance to consumers on other factors like using a "five-senses test" when visiting a nursing home; relying on community reputation; observation of staff-resident interactions; and, availability of senior management to address resident and family concerns.

Foremost: check your MDS mailbox for your rating when it is received and to access available information for explanation of the rating system so that you may respond to potential media calls as well as to resident, family and consumer inquiries. Review the accuracy of survey and other information; there have been reporting problems between the state and federal entities leading to incorrect data being used for the rating system. If your information is incorrect, let us know and we can help to correct it. Your AOPHA contacts are Fran Savard at fsavard@aopha.org or (614) 444-2882, ext. 20; or, John Alfano at jalfano@aopha.org or (614) 444-2882, ext 14; or, Tim White at twhite@aopha.org or (614) 444-2882, ext. 26.