

Eli's Hospice Insider

Surveys & Certification: Say Goodbye To Widespread Use Of Focused Infection Control Surveys

Targeted FIC surveys are not totally forbidden, however.

Hospices no longer have to worry about focused infection control (FIC) surveys.

Why? The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services developed the FIC survey and tool at the beginning of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency "to help surveyors and facilities absorb the critical infection prevention and control practices for combating COVID-19," CMS says in newly updated memo QSO-21-08-NLTC. "Based on stakeholder feedback and survey activity, we believe acute and continuing care (ACC) facilities have incorporated COVID-19 management strategies into their infrastructure and operations, and there is no longer a need to continue the required use of the special FIC survey and tool on a national basis," CMS says in the memo updated Feb. 2. That includes for hospices, confirms the National Association for Home Care & Hospice.

"CMS is rescinding the survey requirement per QSO-21-08 to conduct FIC surveys," CMS spells out in the memo. Survey Agencies and Accrediting Organizations "should return to the existing standard survey processes and continue to assess COVID-19 infection prevention and control elements by focusing on the regulatory requirements, while incorporating lessons learned about infection control oversight during the PHE," the memo instructs.



For example: "Most ... providers have requirements to develop and maintain approved policies and procedures for minimizing transmission of infectious disease that are established based on nationally recognized standards of practice," CMS offers in the memo. "Surveyors will assess whether those policies are developed appropriately and followed."

Beware: Some providers may wish to use the FIC tool for prep, which is allowed. But "while the contents of the FIC survey tool are generally still applicable, if facilities wish to continue use of the tool as a template for their own self-assessment, we encourage them to carefully review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines as there have been changes to the recommendations since the original tool and update were released," CMS cautions.

In the memo, CMS also lifts its visitation restrictions as they are "no longer necessary," according to the memo. "Facilities should continue to adhere to basic COVID-19 infection prevention principles consistent with national standards of practice," the memo adds.

Also beware: "More prescriptive state requirements" on infection control procedures and visitation may supersede the CMS version, the memo points out.

And surveyors "may continue to use the targeted FIC survey, on a case-by-case basis, if warranted," CMS adds in the memo at www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-21-08-nltc-revised.pdf.