

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Survey & Clinical News To Use

Providers recently took the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to task on whether an end-of-life or palliative care program qualifies as "hospice" for purposes of coding the MDS. The answer is important because residents receiving hospice care are excluded from the upcoming new quality measure looking at weight loss in facilities. **The answer:** You may only code a hospice program on the MDS when the resident is receiving hospice services provided by a hospice provider licensed by the state or certified by Medicare as such, according to information provided at a recent SNF Open Door Forum.

Not everyone is cut out to be a surveyor. With that in mind, CMS recently announced availability of a surveyor aptitude test and inservice training guidance for surveyors. State survey agencies and CMS regional offices have the option of using the test and inservice guide in hiring and training surveyors. To develop the aptitude test, CMS identified long-term care surveyors recognized for their expertise and excellence. The skills and attributes required to be an effective surveyor include emotional understanding, flexibility, and skill in gathering and integrating information. To read the memo, which includes a list of inservice training resources for surveyors, go to www.cms.hhs.gov/Medicaid/survey-cert/sc0432.pdf.

Wish someone would ensure your temp agency nursing staff are up to par? In the future, you might look for the JCAHO seal of approval. The **Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations** plans to launch a certification program for temporary agencies providing health care staffing by year's end. The program will provide a comprehensive evaluation of an agency's ability to provide competent health care staffing services.

View the draft standards at www.jcaho.org/accredited+organizations/hospitals/standards/field+reviews/hcss_fr_stds.pdf