

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Survey & Clinical News To Use

**CMS has signed off on electronic signatures on the MDS, but you'd better have hard copies of the MDS "immediately available" during the survey.** That's according to a clarification at the October SNF/LTC Open Door Forum (ODF) sponsored on a monthly basis by the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**. In Sept. 9 correspondence to state survey agencies, CMS said facilities could use electronic signatures on the MDS, if their state and local laws and regs allow. Some providers interpreted the memo to say that only facilities with a fully electronic MDS and clinical record system could use the electronic signature. Not true, clarified CMS officials at the October ODF. Facilities with electronic MDS systems can sign the MDS electronically.

**CMS expects state survey agencies to work with state-run quality improvement organizations (QIOs) to improve care for nursing home residents.** That's according to a recent memo from CMS to survey agency directors. The memo outlines a number of initiatives underway that exemplify such collaboration, including a pilot project that encourages states to identify two to three nursing homes in each state that could use help improving their quality of care.

CMS is also marshaling the efforts of its own agency, survey agencies and QIOs to achieve "breakthrough results" in meeting two of its goals under the Government Performance and Result Act: reducing pressure ulcers and reducing unnecessary restraints.

QIOs will work with about 30 percent of nursing homes "not ready to renounce restraints" to teach them alternative resident management strategies designed to "substantially" reduce physical restraint rates.

CMS will also work with states that have restraint rates exceeding 10 percent to determine why the states exceed the national average - and develop strategies to reduce physical restraint use.

Read the CMS correspondence at [www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/survey-cert/sc0501.pdf](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/survey-cert/sc0501.pdf).