

MDS Alert

Industry Norms: Find Out How Your Work Compares

How long does it take others to complete the MDS?

As an MDS coordinator, you may be the only person in your role in your facility. Your colleagues can check in with peers if they have questions about the job, but you may be on your own. How does your MDS completion time stack up against your peers across the country? Is your MDS workflow normal?

The American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination's (AANAC) most recent nurse assessment coordinator work study, released in May 2017, illuminates some of the struggles MDS coordinators/nurse assessment coordinators are facing. The study was based on the responses of 693 professionals whose job titles are "MDS coordinator" or "nurse assessment coordinator," with the aim of collecting data on how long people are spending on various aspects of the job, as well as job satisfaction and salary/compensation.

How do you compare?

The hard numbers, including the total time per resident and the time necessary to complete each component, are as follows, according to the AANAC study press release:

- Comprehensive assessment: 5 hours 5 minutes, per resident
 - o 80 minutes on OBRA Comprehensive Assessment
 - o 54 minutes care planning
 - o 171 minutes on Care Area Assessments (CAAs)
 - each comprehensive assessment resulting in 8.9 triggered care areas, per resident
 - o 52 minutes for OBRA quarterly

You may think that assessments are taking longer to complete than ever before ☹️ and you'd be right. "With the Oct. 1, 2016, addition of the new Section GG coding items, the 5-day PPS Assessment takes 13 minutes longer than it previously did," says **Judi Kulus**, MSN, MAT, RN, NHA, RAC-MT, DNS-CT, vice president of curriculum development at in Denver. "With the addition of the Part A PPS discharge assessment, an additional 30 minutes per assessment has been added to the nurse assessment coordinator workload."

The time and workload creep is evident across the board. "In previous a AANAC work study (2015), completion of an OBRA discharge assessment took an average of 35 minutes," Kulus says. "When combining an OBRA Discharge assessment with the required Part A PPS discharge assessment items, nursing assessment coordinators reported that it now takes 41 minutes to complete the required assessment."

Is there any relief in sight? The good news from the study is that many MDS coordinators and nurse assessment coordinators are decently compensated for their efforts. "This year's report includes the addition of salary benchmark data. Nurse assessment coordinators report compensation between \$61,000-\$70,000 per year or \$26-\$30 per hour. Forty-five percent (45%) report receiving an annual salary, while 55 percent of nurse assessment coordinators report receiving an hourly rate. Education and facility location (urban vs. rural) appear to be top factors influencing of nurse assessment coordinator compensation," the AANAC press release notes.

Still, there's a lot of pressure for MDS coordinators and nurse assessment coordinators to excel consistently, and » go beyond expectations. After all, whoever is responsible for submitting the MDS is responsible for proving that residents receive the care they need, and that the facility receives the reimbursement it deserves. People who have spent years getting to know the RAI process and MDS document may take longer than those newer to the system, as they may have

a hard-earned list of things to check and double-check to make sure their facility is adequately reimbursed. That's a lot of stress, especially for one person.

"The MDS process can be overwhelming on a good day, let alone a day with six to nine admissions or readmissions and discharges of the same number," says **Jessie McGill Rn, RaC-Mt**, report co-author and curriculum development specialist at **AANAC**, in Denver, in the press release. "With more than 600 items on an MDS, the time to complete it accurately and to apply more than 1,100 pages of rules is no simple task."

Make the MDS completion as interdisciplinary as possible. While you are responsible for signing off on the completeness of the MDS and submitting it, you really need your team members across other disciplines to provide you with the information and documentation you need to do your job in a timely, efficient manner.

"The importance of an accurate, timely, comprehensive MDS has only grown more critical over time □ the MDS process drives everything we do in long-term care," says **Jane Belt, Ms, Rn, RaC-Mt, QCP**, report co-author and curriculum development specialist at **AANAC** in Denver in the press release. "The key to accuracy of the MDSs is for the nurse assessment coordinator to have enough time to do the job correctly and according to the requirements of participation. The time reported in the study is for completion of one MDS. The data can reveal if the MDS staffing is at an appropriate level for success."