

MDS Alert

MEDICARE & MDS NEWS

For those who hoped the final SNF PPS rule might soften proposed payment cuts to SNFs -- no such luck. SNFs will be hit with a payment cut of \$360 million starting Oct. 1, to make up for higher-than expected utilization of the Rehab Plus Extensive Services RUG categories. "The decrease in Medicare payment for FY is a huge issue for the industry," says **Rena Shephard, MHA, RN, RAC-MT, C-NE**, founding chair and executive editor of the American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators. "SNFs across the board got a 1.1 percent cut ... but some will get a little bit more or less," she says.

"In California, that's been estimated to come to about \$20 per patient per day for Medicare Part A patients," adds Shephard. "That's really significant," she points out.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has major training plans in the works for the big move to MDS 3.0 and RUG-IV. The agency is planning a series of satellites and conferences and developing training materials to "let you know as much as possible as early as possible," said the agency's **Sheila Lambowitz** in the Aug. 27 SNF/LTC Open Door Forum.

CMS will be training contractors, associations and state agencies so they can support providers throughout the transition to the MDS 3.0 and RUG-IV, set to go live on Oct. 1, 2010. The agency will also have a help desk on the MDS 3.0 that will probably be up and running six months before the system becomes final in October 2010, Lambowitz told ODF participants.