

OASIS Alert

OASIS: New OASIS Tool Has Final Arrival Date

Field testing responses steered the final version of OASIS-C.

A whole new OASIS world is coming in 2010 -- and you'll need to start preparing sooner than you think.

This month, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** plans to issue a new version of the OASIS-C tool that it has significantly revised based on industry comment and field testing, said CMS' **Debra Terkay** at the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice's** annual meeting Oct. 14.

Implementation of the new assessment tool is slated for January 2010, said **Angela Richard** with OASIS contractor **University of Colorado Health Sciences Center**.

CMS field tested the new OASIS-C in 11 home health agencies in Colorado, Massachusetts and Ohio, noted **Elizabeth Madigan** with OASIS contractor **Case Western Reserve University**. Three to five clinicians at each agency tested the tool at various time points.

CMS was careful to choose a mix of provider types such as hospital-based, freestanding and non-profits and a mix of locations ranging from frontier to urban, Madigan explained in a packed session at the conference in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. The agency also made sure that physical therapists completed assessments.

One major purpose of the field testing was to determine which items needed revisions. "If you ask home care folks what they think, they'll tell ya," Madigan joked.

CMS significantly revised the tool based on testers' feedback, noted **Deborah Deitz** with **Abt Associates**, another OASIS contractor.

Example: CMS and its contractors revised the new item on drug education (M1180 on the originally proposed OASIS-C form). The item will now indicate that clinicians don't have to teach every drug on the first visit. Instead, they are encouraged to prioritize the high-risk drugs, Deitz said.

They also revamped the item on the Pneumococcal Vaccine (M1031), Deitz revealed. Instead of asking if the vaccination is "up to date," the new tool will just ask if the patient has ever received the PPV, she explained. That's because determining whether the status is up to date can be complicated. The tool will also ask about vaccinations at discharge instead of admission, she added.

Ambulation Change Gets A Cheer

A number of changes CMS proposed last year will remain in the tool. For example, the new item on ambulation (M0702) will differentiate between walking with a cane and walking with crutches or a walker, Deitz noted. Attendees cheered this long-desired revision.

Other changes Deitz noted include:

- Activities of daily living (ADLs) now must be performed "safely;"
- Medication questions will now ask about 100 percent of a patient's time instead of 50 percent;
- The "prior status" column for ADLs is gone; and

- The prognosis question about death within six months has been replaced with two items on frailty and stability that have more options about the patient's status. Those were well received by field testers, she observed.

Process Measures Add Reporting Burden

Along with welcome changes are ones agencies aren't so sure about. CMS will require data collection on a new batch of process-based measures, Deitz noted. Those include three-part questions on topics like pain, ulcers, heart failure, and diabetes that cover assessment, interventions and care planning. Another process measure requires a depression screen and fall risk screen for all patients.

HHAs like process measures because they have more control over them than patient outcomes, one conference attendee told **Eli**.

And, some testers were happy to "get credit" on OASIS-C for things they already do, like conducting a Braden scale for pressure ulcer risk assessment, Deitz noted. But the process measure questions will add a significant time burden to OASIS data collection, experts note.

New guidance: Along with the new tool will come new Chapter 8 guidance, which offers HHA's advice and tips for each OASIS item, Madigan advised.

And expect even more changes to the OASIS-C tool after it undergoes another round of public comments, the presenters stressed. After CMS issues the revised form in the Federal Register, it will take comments and incorporate them into the final product due out next year.

Next step: CMS will conduct education and training on the new tool once it is finalized, Terkay noted.

Note: Sign up for **Rebecca Friedman Zuber's** Nov. 19 **Eli**-sponsored audioconference, "OASIS C: What You Need to Know Now About this Major Assessment Overhaul," at www.audioeducator.com/industry_conference.php?id=1306 or by calling 1-800-508-2582.