

OASIS Alert

OASIS News ~ New Web Site Addresses Quality Improvement

CMS encourages HHAs to reach for the STAR.

Agencies struggling to get their quality improvement projects off the ground -- or keep them there -- may find this new tool very helpful.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** has launched the Home Health STAR Web site (Setting Targets -- Achieving Results) at www.medqic.org/HH/STAR. This site is designed to assist home health agencies in reviewing OBQI and Home Health Compare data, determine target rates for their Plans of Action and measure improvement for the 11 publicly reported quality measures.

Agencies that access the STAR Web site can review the available benchmark data and set target goals for their Plans of Action. Once agencies have entered their selected target goals, the STAR Web site is able to generate a Trend Graph that provides comparison of the agency's current rate to the state average, national average, prior observed, current observed, and established target rates.

How to do it: Because the Home Health STAR Web site is housed on the MedQIC site, agencies must be registered to the MedQIC site in order to register on the Home Health STAR site.

• **An Institute of Medicine report issued Sept. 21** praises a CMS demonstration pay for performance project as showing significant promise for improving healthcare providers' performance. The IOM joins the **Medicare Payment Advisory Commission** in recommending widespread use of performance-based reimbursement.

"Pay for performance mechanisms should recognize, promote and reward improved coordination of care among a patient's multiple providers and during an entire episode of illness," the IOM says.

For more information about the report, "Rewarding Provider Performance: Aligning Incentives to Medicare," go to www.iom.edu/CMS/2955.aspx.

• **The next ICD revision, ICD-10, won't premier** in the United States before the fall of 2007, says **Linda Martien, CPC, CPC-H**, overseer of coding operations at **National Healing Corp.** of Boca Raton, FL.

Changes to expect: The first character of each ICD-10 code will be alphabetical, Martien says. Some of the codes will have as many as seven characters, she adds. The new code sets will offer significantly more choices, including an expanded trauma section. Combination diagnosis/symptom codes "should reduce the number of codes needed to fully describe the condition," Martien adds.

Adjustment time: Once the ICD-10 codes do premier, you'll have a two-year window to implement them. Learn more about ICD-10 at the **World Health Organization** site www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/.

• **Leslie Norwalk has been named** the acting chief of the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**, federal officials announced Sept. 25. Norwalk, 40, a lawyer who has served in both Bush administrations, was the deputy administrator at the agency and has served on Medicare's senior leadership team for the past five years.

She succeeds **Mark McClellan**, who stepped down, effective Oct. 15. One of Norwalk's first tasks is overseeing the next enrollment period for the prescription drug benefit, which begins Nov. 15.

