

OASIS Alert

Post-Acute Assessment Reform Demo Looking For You

Get a sneak peak at potential post-OASIS tool.

A project that may result in a substitute for or addition to the OASIS assessment is looking for volunteers -- but there's a catch.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** is testing patient assessment, outcomes and payment across the post-acute spectrum -- home health agencies, skilled nursing facilities, inpatient rehab facilities and long-term care hospitals. CMS has pilot tested the Continuity Assessment Record and Evaluation (CARE) tool in those providers already (see Eli's OASIS Alert, Vol. 8, No. 8. p. 72).

Now CMS wants to conduct a full-fledged demonstration in early 2008, and the agency needs volunteers. But the 26-page assessment tool -- which will include OASIS items -- will be a major added burden to HHAs, experts fear.

Upside: Providers must only answer questions related to their services, says consultant **Judy Adams** with Charlotte, NC-based **LarsonAllen**.

CMS appears to recognize that it will have a hard sell with the demonstration. "Providers may ... be targeted for recruitment from analysis of Medicare administrative files and will be contacted," CMS says in a release about the project.

The agency and its contractor, **RTI International**, plan to conduct the demo in 10 "distinct" areas of the country. CMS and RTI will consider characteristics such as corporate ownership, profit status and size for participants.

Hidden benefit: Although the demo will be a paperwork burden for participants, it may end up benefiting the industry in the long run. "A key goal of this project is to generate recommendations for improving CMS payment models," CMS says in the release. Reform includes "aligning incentives among the four PAC settings."

In other words, if home care can provide the same patient outcomes for much less cost than the other inpatient post-acute providers, CMS may encourage more patients to utilize home care. That would bring more patients and more Medicare dollars to agencies.

More paperwork: The CARE tool is "very comprehensive and will be major burden for home health providers, especially when combined with OASIS on admission and discharge," Adams tells **Eli**. v

Note: The form is at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PaperworkReductionActof1995/PRAL/list.asp>.