

OASIS Alert

Survey & Certification: SURVEYORS: UNANNOUNCED BUT NOT UNINFORMED

The merry month of May brings more than the Home Health Compare Web site it marks the beginning of the new OASIS-based survey protocol.

Agencies need to be prepared, warned **Charlotte Hughes**, national advisor for regulatory affairs with **Gentiva Health Services** (see article 8). "The survey process can shut you down and there is no effective appeals process," she told attendees at the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice's** annual policy conference in Washington April 9.

Whether you like the outcome-based quality improvement reports or not, that's what surveyors will be using, along with adverse event reports, case mix reports, submission statistics and error summary reports. These reports allow surveyors to focus on your weaknesses before they ever show up at your office, notes NAHC's **Mary St. Pierre**.

"But these reports are only for your adult, skilled care, Medicare and Medicaid, non-maternity patients," Hughes cautioned. Unless this includes most of your caseload, it is unlikely these will be the only patients surveyors check. They'll be looking for similar issues with other payors to compare care, she added.

The surveys shouldn't take longer, Hughes said, but they will be more focused. Surveyors will arrive with names of patients and risk areas they've identified, along with the survey worksheet (see Eli's OASIS Alert, Vol. 3, No. 11, p. 115 for a copy).

Plan For Success

As you consider how to prepare for your next unannounced survey, Hughes provided this advice:

1. Using OBQI reports is not mandatory yet but if surveyors are using it, so should you.
2. Don't expect the surveyor's report to be exactly the same as yours unless you both pulled them on the same day.
3. Remember Murphy's Law. Make sure everyone in your office knows how to get the surveyor started, in case you're not there when she arrives.
4. When an adverse event occurs, complete the incident report as soon as possible. If the surveyor arrives, you can show how you investigated and what action you took.
5. Monitor the reports the surveyor will use to identify and correct problems early. Know how to access, print and decipher the reports.

