

GAO Releases Special Focus List

Facilities Notified Prior To Public Release

If the Government Accountability Office (GAO) gets its way, the number of nursing facilities on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Special Focus Facility (SFF) list will grow from 135 to 580.

GAO arrived at its enhanced list by altering the methodology used by CMS to make SFF designations. Those changes include the use of a national rather than a state-based comparison and incorporating CMS' Five Star Quality Rating scoring into the calcula-

tion. In addition to notifying the 580 facilities on its revised list, GAO also recently released it to the public.

In its notification letter to the facilities, GAO explained that its expanded list differs substantially from the CMS list.

"The purpose of this notice is to make you aware that the name of your nursing home is on the GAO list slated for public release," the letter says.

"CMS is undertaking the effort to provide this notice in the event you

receive inquiries from Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries."

The GAO list contains the names and addresses of the facilities, which are identified as "the most poorly performing."

Following GAO's actions, the American Health Care Association (AHCA) responded with a statement emphasizing the profession's quality improvements.

"The facts speak for themselves—quality is improving in our nation's nursing facilities," the statement said.

An AHCA analysis revealed that while a number of states have a far greater number of facilities on the GAO list when compared with the CMS SFF list, there are eight states

'The facts speak for themselves—quality is improving.'

that have no facilities on the GAO list—Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Nevada, and Rhode Island.

AHCA members were advised by the association to respond to media inquiries by pointing to evidence that includes the organization's recent annual quality report.

"It is clear that nursing home quality is multidimensional; what is also becoming clear is that it is no more appropriate to compare all nursing homes with one another than it would be appropriate to compare an obstetrics hospital with an oncology hospital," said Vincent Mor in the report titled "Changes in the Quality of Nursing Home Care in the U.S."

—Meg LaPorte

NCAL Board, Officers Elected

The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) has elected new executive officers and seven at-large board members.

The officers are: NCAL chair, Nicolette Merino, regional director of operations, Avamere Health Systems, Wilsonville, Ore.; vice chair, Michael Shepard, owner, The Shepard Group, Pine Bluff, Ark.; and secretary/treasurer, Patricia Giorgio, president/chief executive officer (CEO), Evergreen Estates, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

These officers, along with Immediate Past NCAL Chair Howie Groff, comprise NCAL's Executive Committee.

The seven newly elected at-large board members are: Jim Birchem, president and CEO, ElderCare of Minnesota, Bemidji, Minn.; Ashley Blankenship, administrator, Southridge Village Retirement Center, Heber Springs, Ark.; Marcia Dooner, CEO, Parkinson's Specialty Care, Minneapolis; Edie Gerelli, vice president of operations,

Chelsea Senior Living, Summit, N.J.; Joe Perkin, vice president of operations, Midwest Health Management, Topeka, Kan.; Dean Solden, president, Solden Development Co., Ann Arbor, Mich.; and Brett Waters, administrator, New Beginnings Community Living Home, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

These newly elected individuals join current at-large board members, whose terms will expire in October 2010, including: Deb Choma, nurse/administrator, Shard Villa, Salisbury, Vt.; Vickie Cox, executive administrator, Heritage at Dover, Dover, Del.; Jeffrey Hyatt, owner of Hyatt Family Facilities,

Yakima, Wash.; Christian Mason, president of Senior Housing Investments, Wilsonville, Ore.; Marj Shell, executive director, Miller's Health Systems, Anderson, Ind.; Jan Thayer, owner/CEO, Riverside Lodge Retirement Community, Grand Island, Neb.; and Kristin West, vice president of operations, Kemper Co., Strongsville, Ohio.

—Lisa Gelhaus



Merino