

The CMS Five Star Nursing Home Rating System

An incomplete and inaccurate consumer tool

Myth: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 5 Star Nursing Home Quality rating system provides a useful consumer tool to help individuals choose a nursing facility for their loved one.

Reality: The new CMS rating system utilizes a complex system to assign a star rating to every nursing home nationwide. It is likely that it will create more confusion for consumers. Because of inaccuracies in the data, and missing data sources including the inclusion of all caregivers, consumers may draw inappropriate conclusions as to the quality of a facility based upon the arbitrary star rating.

Myth: In creating the 5 Star rating system, CMS was able to account for and address state-by-state differences in the Survey and Certification system.

Reality: While CMS did recognize weaknesses and regional differences in the Survey and Certification system and limited comparisons within a state, they did not account for differences between survey regions within a state. Further, by not having a tool which allows consumers to compare facilities in different states or regions, it limits the usefulness to individuals looking for a nursing facility.

Myth: The staffing component of the 5 Star rating accurately reflects all caregivers in a nursing facility.

Reality: The staffing rating is characterized by CMS as including all caregivers, however it fails to account for many nurses, therapy services staff, and nurse practitioners – all of whom play a critical role in the quality of care and services that the frail, elderly and disabled residents of our nation's nursing homes require.

Myth: The 5 Star Nursing Home Quality Rating system is similar to quality programs CMS has unveiled for other provider types, such as *Hospital Compare*.

Reality: Unlike the *Hospital Compare* program, CMS did not provide an adequate time period for facilities to view and dispute any inaccurate data before it was posted online. Hospitals are afforded a 30-day review period of data before it is posted to *Hospital Compare*. For the 5 Star program, many facilities nationwide were unable to view their star rating and facility data the evening before the program was rolled out on December 18, and had no opportunity to challenge or dispute inaccurate data.

Myth: The 5 Star Nursing Home Quality Rating system represents the next step in transparency for our nation's nursing homes.

Reality: AHCA and the nursing home profession have embraced the release of data in being more transparent. In fact, nursing facilities were the first providers to publicly report quality measures that were posted online. Unfortunately, CMS was not transparent in developing the 5 star rating system. In fact, CMS provided the rating for every nursing facility in the country to USA Today and the Gannett newspapers prior to providing individual facilities with their rating.

