



Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) in Nursing Homes Overview

Section 6102(c) of the Affordable Care Act requires that all nursing homes develop Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) programs. The statute requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to develop a prototype QAPI program by the end of 2011, establish standards, and provide technical assistance to facilities on the development of best-practices in order to meet such standards. One year after a final rule for QAPI is issued, all nursing homes must have in place and implement an acceptable QAPI plan. CMS is also charged to coordinate the implementation of QAPI with the existing quality assessment and assurance activities.

QAPI ushers in new possibilities for nursing homes to develop comprehensive, proactive performance improvement programs tailored to their own programs and needs, to go beyond compliance with rules, and to engage the whole organization in programs that aspire to ever-improving quality.

CMS has developed a framework of five elements for a QAPI program—this framework is applied to QAPI in all health care settings that CMS regulates e.g., hospitals, home care, ambulatory care, dialysis units. CMS has customized the five QAPI elements for nursing homes, taking into account that residents actually live in nursing homes, that a good quality of life and resident ability to exercise choice are important. At the same time, safety and high quality of all health care services is a paramount goal, as in all other settings. The five elements are:

- Design and Scope
- Governance and Leadership
- Feedback, Data Systems, and Monitoring
- Performance Improvement Projects
- Systematic Analysis and Systemic Action

In September 2010, CMS contracted with the University of Minnesota and Stratis Health, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Minnesota, to assist CMS with multiple tasks related to the QAPI program. These tasks include identifying and/or creating and testing tools to assist nursing homes with QAPI processes, assembling resources that will assist nursing homes with QAPI rollout, identifying best-practices, and developing training materials. To further these goals, the contractor group is launching a small-case QAPI demonstration project in 17 nursing homes in four states. These nursing homes will receive individualized technical assistance and form learning collaboratives for collective sharing of challenges and strategies to launch QAPI programs. From this demonstration and its evaluation, CMS expects to refine tools and resources and assemble best-practice examples to assist in the national QAPI rollout.

CMS plans that surveyors will become familiar with QAPI elements, goals, and processes. The surveyor worksheets that are ultimately developed will mirror the expectations and training offered to providers. CMS also plans to engage consumers and their advocates in the QAPI



process, as well as a large number of stakeholders who represent nursing homes and the professionals that work in them.

The demonstration will include online learning modules, one for each of the five elements. Examples of the type of information included in the modules include:

- Purpose and goals
- Relationship to specific QAPI elements
- Suggested readings
- Tools and resources
- Activities
- Multimedia learning objects, as applicable
- Mastery checklist

Each participating nursing home will be assigned a QAPI liaison (one per state). Nursing homes will complete an initial self-assessment. The liaison provides regular e-mail and phone assistance, and an annual site visit. Liaisons will help to link nursing homes to resources (experts and tools) and monitor progress toward milestones. They will assist nursing homes to prepare for and make most of online modules and learning sessions.

Nursing homes will participate in learning collaboratives, modeled after the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Breakthrough Series. They will emphasize a change process model that brings together a number of organizations, focusing their improvement work on similar goals. They will engage teams from the participating facilities and create positive peer pressure and accountability that accelerates learning and change.

We envision two types of tools to help the nursing homes:

- QAPI process tools available to help NHs manage their QAPI program
 - Examples, checklists, templates, flow-sheets
- QAPI topic tools for processes and outcomes related to monitoring or PIPs

We have begun work on a Web-based resource library that will include Learning Modules on QAPI basics, plus the above-mentioned tools, evidence, case studies, resources, and links to other resources.