

ASSISTED LIVING: ENHANCING PERSON-CENTERED CARE

The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) is the assisted living voice of the American Health Care Association (AHCA), and is dedicated to serving this sector of long term care through national advocacy, education, networking, professional development, and quality initiatives. NCAL represents nearly 4,000 assisted living communities throughout the country.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

NCAL is at the forefront of quality improvement efforts in assisted living. The NCAL Quality Initiative for Assisted Living is a nationwide effort to further improve the quality of care through defined, measurable goals. The four goals focus directly on priorities of federal policymakers: safely reducing hospital readmissions and the off-label use of antipsychotic medications among individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, as well as increasing staff stability and customer satisfaction. NCAL also developed a data tracking tool, LTC Trend Tracker, to allow member providers to monitor their progress on these Quality Initiative goals and compare their results to other assisted living providers at a national level.

REIMBURSEMENT

MEDICAID

About one in six (15 percent) assisted living residents relies on Medicaid to pay for their care. Issues with Medicaid include:

- Medicaid rates are typically far less than market rates.
- Because assisted living is a non-institutional, community-based care setting, Medicaid does not pay for room and board costs.
- CMS issued final regulations in January 2014 that set requirements for home and community-based settings that provide services covered by Medicaid. NCAL is working with CMS as it implements the rule to ensure that assisted living providers can continue to provide Medicaid HCBS and that resident choice is protected, especially for individuals living with dementia.

MEDICARE

Assisted living care is not covered by Medicare. However, since the majority of assisted living residents are Medicare beneficiaries, providers are interested in many issues related to the delivery of Medicare services, including:

- Safely reducing hospital readmissions.
- Safely reducing the off-label use of antipsychotic medications.
- Extending the therapy cap exceptions process, so that beneficiaries can continue to access the medically necessary therapy services they need under Medicare Part B.
- Supporting legislation that would deem time an individual spends under observation status in a hospital eligible to count toward Medicare's three-day stay requirement.

REGULATION OF ASSISTED LIVING

Assisted living/residential care communities are regulated at the state level. Though state licensure terms vary, states do license or certify assisted living providers. States establish standards including staff training, resident assessment, medication and care management, move in/move out rules, and fire safety. State regulations continue to evolve, and typically, at least one-third of states modifies and updates their assisted living regulations in any given year. NCAL tracks and reports these annual changes through its State Regulatory Review.