



Center for Clinical Standards and Quality/Survey & Certification Group

Ref: S&C: 15-52-HHA

DATE: September 11, 2015

TO: State Survey Agency Directors

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: Home Health Agency (HHA) Survey Protocol Training Item Revised

Memorandum Summary

HHA Training Item Revised – The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provides training on the use of the HHA Survey Protocols. The protocols provide guidance to assist surveyors in determining when a Condition-level deficiency may be considered. Previous trainings emphasized that the phrase “consider citing the Condition” implied the surveyor “should” cite the Condition. We have since revised our training in this area to indicate that surveyors may consider citing the Condition when indicated by the regulation but the phrase should not be taken as a prescriptive element of the guidance over surveyor judgment.

Home Health Agencies (HHA) Training Item Revised

The CMS provides training on the use of the HHA Survey Protocols. The protocols provide a set of algorithms to guide surveyors in the course of their work. The HHA Survey Protocols were initially released with S&C Memo 11-11-HHA “Revised Home Health Protocols,” and later updated with S&C Memo 14-14-HHA. The current protocols are also published in the Basic Home Health Agency Surveyor Training Resource Manual Volume 1.

When surveyors determine that expected outcomes have not been met for the various standards/tags within a Condition, the HHA Survey Protocol provides HHA-specific guidelines for when surveyors may consider citing the actual Condition at issue. Previous trainings advised surveyors that the phrase “consider citing the Condition” in the protocol implied the surveyor “should” cite a Condition-level deficiency. This emphasis in training supported a more prescriptive application of the protocol. We have revised our training to indicate that surveyors may consider citing the Condition when indicated by the regulation, but the phrase should not be taken as a prescriptive element of the guidance over surveyor judgment. The protocols serve as a guide to assist surveyors in determining non-compliance at the Condition-level, but when the phrase “consider citing the Condition” is used the intent is to ensure that the citation be carefully evaluated with respect to evidence and is not intended to preclude surveyor judgment.

Page 2 - State Survey Agency Directors

Contact: For any questions concerning the contents of this memorandum please contact Sarah Richardson Fahrendorf at Sarah.Fahrendorf@cms.hhs.gov or 410-786-3112.

Effective Date: Immediately. This policy should be communicated with all survey and certification staff, their managers and the State/Regional Office training coordinators within 30 days of this memorandum.

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management