Five-Star Background & Talking Points
For State Affiliates

BACKGROUND

In April 2019, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) implemented new changes to its Five-Star Quality Rating System to help consumers evaluate skilled nursing care centers. Featured on the Nursing Home Compare website, the star ratings are based on three components—survey data, staffing information, and quality metrics—and reported by a Minimum Data Set (MDS) and claims-based system. The latest changes include updated thresholds for assigning stars (or moving the "goal posts" back) for both the staffing and quality components of the system that will abruptly cause significant changes. An estimated 44 percent of all nursing centers will lose stars in their Quality ratings, 31 percent will lose stars in their Staffing ratings, and approximately 34 percent will lose stars in their Overall ratings.

The new rankings will be published on NHC for the public in late April. Nursing centers will be able to preview their new data through CMS's QIES system before it is published on NHC. AHCA will alert State Executives and State PR Directors when both updates are available.

In the meantime, member nursing centers can now download a toolkit containing talking points, a template media statement, and template letters to families and referral sources/payors on the Five-Star achancalED website here.

TALKING POINTS

The abrupt change in star ratings for nursing centers may be confusing to consumers, residents, and their families. By moving the scoring "goal posts" for two components of the Five-Star system, CMS will cause more than 30 percent of nursing centers nationwide to lose one or more stars overnight—even though nothing changed in quality of care.

- In April 2019, CMS implemented significant new changes to its Five-Star Rating System featured on Nursing Home Compare, which includes changing the thresholds for assigning stars for both the staffing and quality measure components (e.g. moving the goal posts back) that will cause many providers to suddenly lose stars.
- AHCA estimates the following impact to nursing center's OVERALL ratings (between March 2019 and April 2019) because of the new changes:
  - 48 percent or approximately 7,555 of nursing centers will not change
  - While 34 percent or approximately 5,273 will lose one or more stars
  - And 15 percent or approximately 2,411 will gain stars
- The sudden change in ratings will be disruptive as it may impact access to care since Managed Care Organizations and hospital discharge networks often require facilities maintain their star ratings.

- The latest star ratings cannot be compared to ratings prior to April 2019 because the "goal posts" have moved and are just different. This is like comparing inches to centimeters.

Quality care is still being practiced and delivered every day in [STATE].

- Through our Quality Initiative, [STATE] has experienced significant improvements, including fewer [INSERT AREA – FOR EXAMPLE FEWER PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS] and decreased [INSERT AREA – FOR EXAMPLE MORE PEOPLE ARE BEING DISCHARGED BACK TO THE COMMUNITY].

- On the **national level** since 2012, more nursing centers than ever before are providing person-centered care, leading to improvements in 18 of the 24 quality measures reported on Nursing Home Compare, fewer residents receiving antipsychotic medications, and staff spending more individual time with residents than ever before in a profession where workforce remains a challenge.
    - 20% decrease in pressure ulcers (approximately 17,687 people)
    - 61% in urinary tract infections (approximately 75,914 people)
    - Fewer than 1 in 7 nursing center residents are receiving antipsychotic medication, a significant decline from 1 out of 4 in 2011.
        - Restraints and antipsychotic medications have been replaced with robust activity programs, religious services, social workers and resident councils so that residents can be mentally, physically and socially engaged.
    - 3 out of 4 nursing centers have more registered nurses (RNs) and more clinical staff caring for residents than what CMS projects they should have based on the type of residents in each facility.

While the Five-Star system can be a helpful tool, consumers should not rely on it exclusively when choosing a nursing center for themselves or a loved one.

- Visiting a center is the best way to learn about the specific services provided, ask staff, families and residents questions, and learn about payment options. Families should observe the environment and ask themselves:
    - Is the center calm and quiet? Or chaotic and noisy? How engaged are staff with residents?
- If NHC is used as a starting point to search for and compare centers we recommend families:
    - First, determine why Nursing Home Compare is needed:
        - Short-stay or long-stay care?
        - Dementia or chronic disease care?
    - Asking these questions will help determine the information needed on the website (e. g. pressure ulcers, if you are immobile; antipsychotics, if you have dementia; and functional improvement and return to the community if rehab is needed).

- o NHC also helps identify potential facilities in specific geographic locations by allowing individuals to enter in their zip code to compare centers available to them.
- CareConversations.org is another site designed to help families starting to find the right place, offering advice and other helpful resources.

AHCA supports public reporting and transparency of nursing center data.

- AHCA supported legislation to publicly report more quality measures for nursing centers and link to payment.
- AHCA supports the latest overall Five-Star changes including:
    - o Lifting the survey freeze to reflect new data (health inspections conducted on or after November 28, 2017, will be calculated into a facility's overall star rating;
    - o Gradually increasing the scoring on the quality measures every six months, reducing lag times in updates;
    - o And separating out long-stay and short-stay quality measures.
- AHCA continues to support adding customer satisfaction and turnover and retention measures to Five-Star to improve the system.