

November 3, 2025 Weekly Clinical Update

Even if you are living under a rock or have been on an extended vacation to outer space, you know the Federal government is “shutdown”, meaning limited to “essential operations”. It is a bit risky to address the situation because, hopefully this fiasco will come to an end sooner rather than later, but nursing facilities should be putting some safety nets in place until the shutdown is over, and everyone goes back to work.

Let’s begin with key operational disruptions in nursing facilities based on the shutdown:

- Surveys and certifications are suspended. Only “immediate jeopardy” complaints are being investigated. Survey backlogs existed prior to this shutdown, and this situation is making it even worse. Nationwide, prior to the shutdown in the nation as a whole, 2396 facilities were overdue by 18+ months.
- Telehealth services expired on September 30, 2025, which limits virtual visits to rural sites only causing reduced access for residents and requires transport burdens for in-person care.
- Medicare payments are continuing via mandatory funding, but it would not be surprising if processing delays (up to 10 business days hold) occurred. Medicaid is funded through Q1 2026, but state-level pressures may occur which has the potential to cause cash-flow squeezes for facilities.
- CMS call centers and help desks are scaled back, leading to slower responses to billing, appeals, or eligibility queries leading to bottlenecks in approvals and appeals.

So what should facilities be doing to protect residents and protect operations? Facilities are not powerless.

- Prioritize internal audits by implementation of voluntary self-audits using CMS tools. Document everything to mitigate post-shutdown scrutiny.
- Adapt to telehealth limits by advocating for retroactive waiver extensions through AHCA and contact the state Medicaid program for telehealth policies, which remain intact.
- Secure cash flow by submission of claims promptly and monitor your Medicare Administrative Contractor updates for updates related to potential claim delays. If possible.
- Enhance resident and family communication. They are nervous about this shutdown also, and some families of residents may have been affected by the shutdown on personal levels, and they may need some support. Consider hosting virtual town halls to explain any disruptions transparently.

- Advocate relentlessly. Contact the local Congress loudly and frequently. Tell them to open the government back up soon. Tell them the impact this shutdown is affecting or potentially affecting your residents, your residents' family members, your staff and your organization. Tell your story to them and tell it often. Encourage your residents, your staff, and your family members to contact Congress to open the government back up.