



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality
99 Chauncy Street, 11th Floor Boston, MA 02111

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

JOHN W. POLANOWICZ
SECRETARY

CHERYL BARTLETT
ACTING COMMISSIONER

Circular Letter: DHCQ 13-11-604

TO: Massachusetts Nursing Home Administrators

FROM: Madeleine Biondolillo, MD
Director, Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

Sherman Lohnes, Assistant Director
Division of Health Care Quality

DATE: November 20, 2013

RE: Changes to the Nurse Aide Registry Verification Process and Statement of Deficiency/Plan of Correction Process

In the next few weeks, the Department of Public Health, Division of Health Care Quality (DPH) will be introducing two new web based tools for Massachusetts nursing homes:

1. Nurse Aide Registry verifications, which until now have been done by phone, will be done using a website associated with the licensing of nurses and nursing home administrators.
2. Statements of deficiency, which until now have been mailed to nursing homes by DPH, will be made available to nursing homes on a secure website created by CMS. The CMS website will also allow for the electronic submission of plans of correction.

All Massachusetts nursing homes will be required to use both applications.

As a result of this transition, every nursing home in Massachusetts will need to be enrolled in both systems. Detailed information on the enrollment process and how to use these new products will be provided to all nursing homes in two separate letters.

On-Line Nurse Aide Registry:

To date, Massachusetts nursing homes and individual nurse aides have only been able to verify the certification status of a nurse aide by phone. With an on-line Nurse Aide Registry, information on the certification status of aides will be available to facilities, aides and the public on the same website that is now used to check the status of licensed individuals such as nurses and nursing home administrators. In addition to the public website, each nursing home will have its own account for verification associated with employment.

As a result of this transition, a new certification number will be created on the Nurse Aide Registry database for each certified aide. Over the next two years, nurse aides will receive their new certification number when they renew their certification. No additional action is required on the part of nurse aides.

In the next few weeks, DPH will send each current user of the automated phone system, including all nursing homes, a letter containing its unique user name and password for new system; post information regarding the new registry process on the DPH website; and provide facilities with a fact sheet on these changes that may be shared with nurse aides.

Electronic Plans of Correction (ePOC):

Sometime after the first of the year, CMS will require all states to provide nursing homes with an electronic statement of deficiency for each nursing home survey and complaint. Massachusetts is one of three states nationwide that is now able to participate in the advance roll-out of this application.

In order for a nursing home to obtain its statement of deficiency (SOD), a representative of the facility must have access to the ePOC program. Unlike state programs such as the Health Care Facility Reporting System (HCFRS) used for reporting incidents, and the new Nurse Aide Registry verification process described above, access to ePOC is obtained through a CMS website.

Additional information on how to access an SOD and submit a Plan of Correction (POC) will be sent to each nursing home and posted on the DPH website.

Once ePOC is in use, DPH will no longer be mailing SODs to nursing homes. In addition, nursing homes will be required to submit their POC to DPH using ePOC. This will replace the current process of nursing homes scanning and emailing their POC to DPH.

Prior to transitioning a nursing home to the ePOC process, DPH will provide that nursing home with a fact sheet on the ePOC process during the entrance conference of the survey or complaint.

Summary:

No response is required to this letter. In the next few weeks nursing homes will need to obtain access to two new applications. Additional information on each application will be sent to your nursing home shortly.

DPH will provide facilities with a point of contact for questions on both applications in the letter describing the enrollment process, and post additional information on the use of these applications on the DPH website.

We look forward to working with you on the roll-out of each of these new programs.