



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

October 18, 2019

AL TSA: NH #2019-024
**QSO-20-02-NH UPDATES TO THE NURSING HOME COMPARE WEBSITE
AND THE FIVE STAR QUALITY RATING SYSTEM**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

This letter is to inform you of upcoming changes to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) *Nursing Home Compare* website and the *Five Star Quality Rating System*. CMS announced these changes in a memorandum, [QSO-20-02-NH](#).

Removal of quality measures related to pain

As part of an ongoing plan to fight the opioid crisis, CMS reviewed quality measures to help ensure the measures do not incentivize inappropriate opioid prescribing. CMS believes facilities have taken strong actions to prevent the overuse of opioids. However, to avoid any potential scenario where a facility's performance on the pain quality measures may inappropriately contribute to their decision to seek the administration of an opioid, CMS will remove two quality measures from the *Nursing Home Compare* website and the *Five Star Quality Rating System* in October 2019. These measures are:

- *Percentage of short-stay residents who report moderate to severe pain.*
- *Percentage of long-stay residents who report moderate to severe pain.*

Increase of Quality Measure Thresholds

In April 2019, CMS announced changes to the *Five Star Quality Rating System* to help consumers identify differences in quality between facilities, and incentivize quality improvement among facilities. One of the changes was to increase the thresholds for quality measures every six months.

In April 2020, CMS will begin increasing quality measure (QM) thresholds by 50% of the average rate of improvement in QM score, and will do so every six months. This adjustment may cause a change in a facilities Five-Star rating.

The *Nursing Home Compare* website and *Five Star Quality Rating System* are one source of information about nursing homes, and consumers should seek other sources as well. For example, CMS encourages families to visit facilities and speak to staff/current residents to find the nursing home most suited for their needs or the needs of a loved one.

Nursing Home Compare Update Schedule

Normally, the *Nursing Home Compare* website and *Five Star Quality Rating System* are updated the last Wednesday of each month. However, due to the holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day), the website and rating system will be updated on October 23, 2019, December 4, 2019, and January 29, 2020.

Future updates will continue to occur on the last Wednesday of each month.

Dear NH Administrator
October 18, 2019
Page 2

The effective date of the QSO memorandum is October 23, 2019. For questions about the QSO memorandum, please email: BetterCare@cms.hhs.gov

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. For questions directed to Residential Care Services, please contact Lisa Herke, Nursing Home Policy Program Manager at (509) 225-2819 or lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"