
42 U.S. Code § 1395i-3

Requirements for, and assuring quality of care in, skilled nursing facilities

(a) “Skilled nursing facility” defined

In this subchapter, the term “skilled nursing facility” means an institution (or a distinct part of an institution) which—

- (1) is primarily engaged in providing to residents—
 - (A) skilled nursing care and related services for residents who require medical or nursing care, or
 - (B) rehabilitation services for the rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons,and is not primarily for the care and treatment of mental diseases;
- (2) has in effect a transfer agreement (meeting the requirements of section 1395x(l) of this title) with one or more hospitals having agreements in effect under section 1395cc of this title; and
- (3) meets the requirements for a skilled nursing facility described in subsections (b), (c), and (d) of this section.

(b) Requirements relating to provision of services

(1) Quality of life

(A) In general

A skilled nursing facility must care for its residents in such a manner and in such an environment as will promote maintenance or enhancement of the quality of life of each resident.

(B) Quality assessment and assurance

A skilled nursing facility must maintain a quality assessment and assurance committee, consisting of the director of nursing services, a physician designated by the facility, and at least 3 other members of the facility’s staff, which (i) meets at least quarterly to identify issues with respect to which quality assessment and assurance activities are necessary and (ii) develops and implements appropriate plans of action to correct identified quality deficiencies. A State or the Secretary may not require disclosure of the records of such committee except insofar as such disclosure is related to the compliance of such committee with the requirements of this subparagraph.

(2) Scope of services and activities under plan of care

A skilled nursing facility must provide services to attain or maintain the highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being of each resident, in accordance with a written plan of care which—

- (A) describes the medical, nursing, and psychosocial needs of the resident and how such needs will be met;
 - (B) is initially prepared, with the participation to the extent practicable of the resident or the resident’s family or legal representative, by a team which includes the resident’s attending physician and a registered professional nurse with responsibility for the resident; and
 - (C) is periodically reviewed and revised by such team after each assessment under paragraph (3).
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(3) Residents' assessment

(A) Requirement

A skilled nursing facility must conduct a comprehensive, accurate, standardized, reproducible assessment of each resident's functional capacity, which assessment—

- (i) describes the resident's capability to perform daily life functions and significant impairments in functional capacity;
- (ii) is based on a uniform minimum data set specified by the Secretary under subsection (f)(6)(A);
- (iii) uses an instrument which is specified by the State under subsection (e)(5); and
- (iv) includes the identification of medical problems.

(B) Certification

(i) In general

Each such assessment must be conducted or coordinated (with the appropriate participation of health professionals) by a registered professional nurse who signs and certifies the completion of the assessment. Each individual who completes a portion of such an assessment shall sign and certify as to the accuracy of that portion of the assessment.

(ii) Penalty for falsification

- (I) An individual who willfully and knowingly certifies under clause (i) a material and false statement in a resident assessment is subject to a civil money penalty of not more than \$1,000 with respect to each assessment.
- (II) An individual who willfully and knowingly causes another individual to certify under clause (i) a material and false statement in a resident assessment is subject to a civil money penalty of not more than \$5,000 with respect to each assessment.
- (III) The provisions of section 1320a–7a of this title (other than subsections (a) and (b)) shall apply to a civil money penalty under this clause in the same manner as such provisions apply to a penalty or proceeding under section 1320a–7a(a) of this title.

(iii) Use of independent assessors

If a State determines, under a survey under subsection (g) or otherwise, that there has been a knowing and willful certification of false assessments under this paragraph, the State may require (for a period specified by the State) that resident assessments under this paragraph be conducted and certified by individuals who are independent of the facility and who are approved by the State.

(C) Frequency

(i) In general

Subject to the timeframes prescribed by the Secretary under section 1395yy(e)(6) of this title, such an assessment must be conducted—

- (I) promptly upon (but no later than 14 days after the date of) admission for each individual admitted on or after October 1, 1990, and by not later than January 1, 1991, for each resident of the facility on that date;
- (II) promptly after a significant change in the resident's physical or mental condition; and
- (III) in no case less often than once every 12 months.

(ii) Resident review

The skilled nursing facility must examine each resident no less frequently than once every 3 months

and, as appropriate, revise the resident's assessment to assure the continuing accuracy of the assessment.

(D) Use

The results of such an assessment shall be used in developing, reviewing, and revising the resident's plan of care under paragraph (2).

(E) Coordination

Such assessments shall be coordinated with any State-required preadmission screening program to the maximum extent practicable in order to avoid duplicative testing and effort.

(4) Provision of services and activities

(A) In general

To the extent needed to fulfill all plans of care described in paragraph (2), a skilled nursing facility must provide, directly or under arrangements (or, with respect to dental services, under agreements) with others for the provision of—

- (i) nursing services and specialized rehabilitative services to attain or maintain the highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being of each resident;
- (ii) medically-related social services to attain or maintain the highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being of each resident;
- (iii) pharmaceutical services (including procedures that assure the accurate acquiring, receiving, dispensing, and administering of all drugs and biologicals) to meet the needs of each resident;
- (iv) dietary services that assure that the meals meet the daily nutritional and special dietary needs of each resident;
- (v) an on-going program, directed by a qualified professional, of activities designed to meet the interests and the physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being of each resident;
- (vi) routine and emergency dental services to meet the needs of each resident; and
- (vii) treatment and services required by mentally ill and mentally retarded residents not otherwise provided or arranged for (or required to be provided or arranged for) by the State.

The services provided or arranged by the facility must meet professional standards of quality. Nothing in clause (vi) shall be construed as requiring a facility to provide or arrange for dental services described in that clause without additional charge.

(B) Qualified persons providing services

Services described in clauses (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), and (vi) of subparagraph (A) must be provided by qualified persons in accordance with each resident's written plan of care.

(C) Required nursing care

(i) In general

Except as provided in clause (ii), a skilled nursing facility must provide 24-hour licensed nursing service which is sufficient to meet nursing needs of its residents and must use the services of a registered professional nurse at least 8 consecutive hours a day, 7 days a week.

(ii) Exception

To the extent that clause (i) may be deemed to require that a skilled nursing facility engage the services of a registered professional nurse for more than 40 hours a week, the Secretary is authorized to waive such requirement if the Secretary finds that—

- (I) the facility is located in a rural area and the supply of skilled nursing facility services in such area is
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not sufficient to meet the needs of individuals residing therein,

(II) the facility has one full-time registered professional nurse who is regularly on duty at such facility 40 hours a week,

(III) the facility either has only patients whose physicians have indicated (through physicians' orders or admission notes) that each such patient does not require the services of a registered nurse or a physician for a 48-hour period, or has made arrangements for a registered professional nurse or a physician to spend such time at such facility as may be indicated as necessary by the physician to provide necessary skilled nursing services on days when the regular full-time registered professional nurse is not on duty,

(IV) the Secretary provides notice of the waiver to the State long-term care ombudsman (established under section 307(a)(12)^[1] of the Older Americans Act of 1965) and the protection and advocacy system in the State for the mentally ill and the mentally retarded, and

(V) the facility that is granted such a waiver notifies residents of the facility (or, where appropriate, the guardians or legal representatives of such residents) and members of their immediate families of the waiver.

A waiver under this subparagraph shall be subject to annual renewal.

(5) Required training of nurse aides

(A) In general

(i) Except as provided in clause (ii), a skilled nursing facility must not use on a full-time basis any individual as a nurse aide in the facility on or after October 1, 1990 for more than 4 months unless the individual—

(I) has completed a training and competency evaluation program, or a competency evaluation program, approved by the State under subsection (e)(1)(A), and

(II) is competent to provide nursing or nursing-related services.

(ii) A skilled nursing facility must not use on a temporary, per diem, leased, or on any basis other than as a permanent employee any individual as a nurse aide in the facility on or after January 1, 1991, unless the individual meets the requirements described in clause (i).

(B) Offering competency evaluation programs for current employees

A skilled nursing facility must provide, for individuals used as a nurse aide^[2] by the facility as of January 1, 1990, for a competency evaluation program approved by the State under subsection (e)(1) and such preparation as may be necessary for the individual to complete such a program by October 1, 1990.

(C) Competency

The skilled nursing facility must not permit an individual, other than in a training and competency evaluation program approved by the State, to serve as a nurse aide or provide services of a type for which the individual has not demonstrated competency and must not use such an individual as a nurse aide unless the facility has inquired of any State registry established under subsection (e)(2)(A) that the facility believes will include information concerning the individual.

(D) Re-training required

For purposes of subparagraph (A), if, since an individual's most recent completion of a training and competency evaluation program, there has been a continuous period of 24 consecutive months during none of which the individual performed nursing or nursing-related services for monetary compensation, such individual shall complete a new training and competency evaluation program or a new competency

evaluation program.

(E) Regular in-service education

The skilled nursing facility must provide such regular performance review and regular in-service education as assures that individuals used as nurse aides are competent to perform services as nurse aides, including training for individuals providing nursing and nursing-related services to residents with cognitive impairments.

(F) “Nurse aide” defined

In this paragraph, the term “nurse aide” means any individual providing nursing or nursing-related services to residents in a skilled nursing facility, but does not include an individual—

- (i) who is a licensed health professional (as defined in subparagraph (G)) or a registered dietician, or
- (ii) who volunteers to provide such services without monetary compensation.

Such term includes an individual who provides such services through an agency or under a contract with the facility.

(G) “Licensed health professional” defined

In this paragraph, the term “licensed health professional” means a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, physical, speech, or occupational therapist, physical or occupational therapy assistant, registered professional nurse, licensed practical nurse, licensed or certified social worker, registered respiratory therapist, or certified respiratory therapy technician.

(6) Physician supervision and clinical records

A skilled nursing facility must—

- (A) require that the medical care of every resident be provided under the supervision of a physician;
- (B) provide for having a physician available to furnish necessary medical care in case of emergency; and
- (C) maintain clinical records on all residents, which records include the plans of care (described in paragraph (2)) and the residents’ assessments (described in paragraph (3)).

(7) Required social services

In the case of a skilled nursing facility with more than 120 beds, the facility must have at least one social worker (with at least a bachelor’s degree in social work or similar professional qualifications) employed full-time to provide or assure the provision of social services.

(8) Information on nurse staffing

(A) In general

A skilled nursing facility shall post daily for each shift the current number of licensed and unlicensed nursing staff directly responsible for resident care in the facility. The information shall be displayed in a uniform manner (as specified by the Secretary) and in a clearly visible place.

(B) Publication of data

A skilled nursing facility shall, upon request, make available to the public the nursing staff data described in subparagraph (A).

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