



Supporting Quality Health Care Services at Home

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Statement of the American Association for Homecare on Public Reporting of Home Health Quality Measurements

The American Association for Homecare (AAHomecare) and our members support the Secretary's initiative to report home health agency quality outcomes to American consumers. We have been pleased to have had the opportunity to work with CMS, consumer organizations, and the American Health Quality Association to ensure that public reporting of home health quality measures is as meaningful as possible for consumers.

Public reporting of the Quality Indicators will help consumers gain a better understanding of what homecare is. It will help them see that it's an alternative to institutional placement, and provides a level of care that can bring people home from the hospital faster and even keep them from having to be hospitalized in the first place. Home health agencies routinely provide services that were available only in hospitals a decade ago, for example, IV antibiotic therapy, chemotherapy, infusion therapy, and blood transfusions.

Medicare beneficiaries have the right to choose their home health agencies, and now they will have some objective data to use in their selection process, along with consulting with their physicians and family members. And soon consumers will have other valuable tools as well, such as CMS's "Home Health Compare" Web site, and the "Home Health Checklist" developed by the home health community.

Our members strive to provide the highest quality of care for their patients. Home health agencies have been implementing quality improvement programs for a number of years, and they are now embracing Medicare's new Outcome Based Quality Improvement program. CMS expects 100 percent compliance with Medicare requirements, and home health agencies are very proud to meet these standards. The public reporting initiative will help raise home health quality to a new and unprecedented level of excellence.

However, there are a few caveats:

- The Quality Indicators are just one tool for consumers to use in selecting and evaluating a home health agency.

- Although the data on which the QIs are based is risk adjusted, risk adjustment is an imperfect science.
- These quality indicators apply only to homecare services provided to Medicare and Medicaid patients, reflecting just a part of the spectrum of homecare.
- The 11 QI measures, with their emphasis on improvement in Activities of Daily Living, are reflective of one model of home health care – short term, often post-hospital - for patients who are capable of improving. They are less reflective of the more chronic, longer term, patients whose debilities will progress with age and the disease process, and who can be stabilized at best.

We believe that the publicly reported QIs will demonstrate that homecare is a very successful benefit, where people get better, or else are provided with the services they need as they age and their illnesses progress so that they can remain at home with their families, rather than face placement in an institutional setting.

The American Association for Homecare (AAHomecare) is the unified voice that represents all the elements of homecare under one roof—from home medical equipment and respiratory therapy to home health services and from re/hab technology to infusion therapy. AAHomecare is dedicated to working to advance the value and practice of quality health care services at home. Its 3,000 members provide home health services, home medical equipment and supplies, home infusion therapy, and rehabilitation technology services to consumers in their homes. For more information, please visit www.aahomecare.org.

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