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AHCA Backs Reduced Regulatory Burden in Proposed RoP

In a letter and comments to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), AHCA has offered broad support for proposed changes to the Requirements of Participation (RoP) that the agency released in July. However, the organization also offers some suggestions to clarify language and to streamline rules to an even greater degree.

CMS has says its proposal works to “emphasize the agency’s commitment to ensuring safety and quality in nursing homes” and at the same time allow providers to keep their focus on their residents “by saving them \$616 million in administrative costs annually that can be reinvested in patient care.”

Previously, AHCA applauded the proposed rule, which in addition to reducing regulatory paperwork and other matters, would delay implementation of some Phase 3 requirements for one year from the original November 2019 date. This proposed delay includes components of the Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) requirements and portions of the Compliance and Ethics Program requirements.

In comments about the revisions, AHCA again made clear its satisfaction with the direction the agency had taken in its draft rule. “[CMS] has proposed changes that would eliminate unnecessary paperwork and

allow long term care facilities and caregivers to devote more of their time and resources to resident care,” says David Gifford, MD, AHCA chief medical officer and senior vice president of quality and regulatory affairs.

“We are pleased that in proposing these changes, CMS preserved important advances in these regulations such as those addressing infection prevention and control, resident rights, and person-centered care,” he says.

“At the same time, many of the changes in the proposed rule will allow caregivers to devote more time to resident care instead of completing paperwork that does not help keep residents safe and healthy.” Gifford also says in the letter to CMS that the association appreciates and supports CMS’ proposal on the one-year delay of some of the Phase 3 requirements.

AHCA says in addition it also supports CMS modifying the QAPI program requirements in order to be consistent with the QAPI requirements for other Medicare- and Medicaid-



participating providers, such as hospitals and other major inpatient provider types. “It is essential to hold health care providers to the same standard,” AHCA says.

CMS also had proposed revisions to the grievance policy requirements. AHCA supports these changes while noting the importance of the grievance process. “AHCA believes it is important for residents to have an ability to identify areas of concern to which a nursing center must respond. This can occur on a regular basis without triggering the need for a more formal grievance process,” the association says. 🌟

Elizabeth Blankenship Named 2019 Jan Thayer Award Recipient

During her more than 40-year career in senior living, Elizabeth Blankenship, RN, former owner and operator of assisted living communities in Arkansas, has championed common-sense state regulation, quality measurement and improvement, and a positive workplace environment.

“As a nurse who worked her way up to soon run her own long term care communities, Liz is an inspiration to the profession,” says Scott Tittle, NCAL executive director. “Her story is remarkable, but it was her involvement at the state and national levels that make her worthy of this award. After finding effective ways to improve the



Blankenship

lives of her residents and employees, Liz committed to sharing that success with her fellow providers to lift up the entire sector.”

Now retired, Blankenship previously owned and operated Southridge Village Assisted Living, a company consisting of four assisted living and continuing care retirement communities throughout Arkansas.

She designed and built some of the first private apartments for assisted living residents in the state, dubbed Homestyle Cottages, that maximized independence in a homelike environment.

When the Arkansas Legislature established the licensure of assisted

living in 2001, Blankenship served on the committee that helped draft the regulations for the sector. She continued to serve the state on numerous committees, task forces, and boards.

At the national level, Blankenship was one of the first NCAL State Leaders representing Arkansas. Additionally, she served on the NCAL Quality Committee, and her clinical expertise and workforce innovations made her a sought-out speaker at multiple national conferences.

The Jan Thayer Pioneer Award recognizes individuals who have moved the senior care profession forward, positively affecting the lives of those served and those who serve. Recipients must demonstrate dedication, leadership, and considerable contributions to the profession. ❁

Janet Snipes Receives 2019 Mary K. Ousley Champion of Quality Award

AHCA/NCAL has announced Janet Snipes, executive director of Holly Heights Nursing Center, is the 2019 recipient of the Mary K. Ousley Champion of Quality Award. Snipes is recognized for her contributions to quality in long term and post-acute care.

“Janet’s work with federal regulators, payers, and providers to improve quality outcomes in this profession has made a national impact,” says Mary Ousley, AHCA Quality Cabinet co-chair and the award’s namesake.

“This award recognizes individuals who embrace quality as a central focus of their work, and Janet does just that. It’s an honor to recognize her for her commitment and dedication.”

For more than 30 years, Snipes’ entire career has been devoted to driving

quality improvements and reshaping federal policy to improve national quality outcomes. Snipes was an early champion of the pursuit of quality outcomes and is known statewide for mentoring others to do the same.

As chair of the Colorado Health Care Association Board of Directors, Snipes was a pivotal part of creating a pay-for-performance model, which gives providers incentives to lean toward quality outcomes to meet and exceed national quality goals. Sharing the success of the Colorado model nationally helped encourage other states to adopt similar structures.

Her national commitment to quality

has shown through her contribution of time, serving as a member of the AHCA Survey Regulatory Reform Workgroup, chair of the AHCA Survey & Regulatory and Quality Improvement

Committees, co-chair of the Quality Cabinet, and a member of the AHCA Board of Governors.

Each year, AHCA/NCAL presents this prestigious award to an individual who has made significant national contributions to advancing quality performance in long term and post-acute care. Recipients display leadership in the development, promotion, and implementation of quality improvement initiatives that have resulted in measurable outcomes. ❁



Snipes

AHCA/NCAL Announces Five 2019 Gold Quality Award Achievers

AHCA/NCAL has announced that five long term and post-acute care providers have earned the 2019 Gold – Excellence in Quality Award. The Gold Award is the final of three distinct levels possible through the organization’s National Quality Awards program, which recognizes organizations that serve as models of excellence in providing high-quality care.

This year’s Gold – Excellence in Quality Award recipients are:

- Christian Health Care Center, a skilled nursing and assisted living facility in Wyckoff, N.J.
- George E. Wahlen Ogden Veterans Home, a skilled nursing center in Ogden, Utah
- Parker at Stonegate, an assisted living community in Highland Park, N.J.
- The Villages Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, a skilled nursing center in Lady Lake, Fla.
- Vista Pacifica Convalescent, a skilled nursing center in Riverside, Calif.

“The Gold Quality Award is the highest honor a facility can receive that recognizes its quality of care,” says AHCA/NCAL President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mark Parkinson.

“These recipients are role models for our sector, and because of their years of hard work, dedication, and passion, they are improving and will continue to improve lives every day. This recognition is more than well deserved.”

Based on the core values and criteria of the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award program challenges member providers to achieve performance excellence through three progressive levels—Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The Gold – Excellence in Quality Award is the most prestigious of the program.

“These recipients have shown



Vista Pacifica Convalescent

superior performance in areas of quality, and the amount of time and dedication they have put into this is extraordinary,” says Alana Wolfe, chair of the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Board of Overseers.

“They should be extremely proud of reaching this milestone, and we look forward to celebrating their achievements this coming fall.”

Since the inception of the National Quality Award Program in 1996, only 38 long term and post-acute care providers—excluding this year’s recipients—had achieved this level of quality recognition.

The Quality Awards journey is not an easy one, and it is unique for every organization. However, they all agree that the rewards are well worth the time, energy, and effort they invest in pursuing this recognition. Here are a few insights from the 2019 Gold – Excellence in Quality Award recipients.

■ *Vista Pacifica Convalescent*. “Our journey through the Quality Award program has resulted in significant growth, improvement, and innovation on all levels of our organization. We refined our processes and furthered our commitment to continuous quality improvement and creating the greatest environment possible for our patients, customers, and workforce,” says Allan Engelauf, MS, LNHA, administrator.

“The Quality Award process has

resulted in significant improvements to staff engagement and morale.”

For instance, the site visit brought everyone together, and “engagement skyrocketed as a result.” Finally, he observes, “Not only has the Gold Quality Award attracted more customers, but even more importantly, it has increased the confidence that our current customers have in us as an organization.”

■ *Christian Health Care Center*. “CHCC’s quality journey has reinforced the importance of having a proactive approach to performance improvement and setting extremely high standards for performance excellence,” says Stephen Dunke, LNHA, FACHE, vice president and chief operating officer.

“By focusing on and responding to the voice of the customer, we’ve been able to increase our already high patient satisfaction scores and ensure that we



Christian Health Care Center

are meeting and working to exceed the needs of those we serve.”

Furthermore, the award journey has been valuable in enabling the team to fine-tune processes aimed at improving employee engagement.

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IMPROVING LIVES *by* DELIVERING SOLUTIONS *for* QUALITY CARE

AHCA/NCAL SALUTES OUR 50 STATE AFFILIATES!

Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association
Alabama Nursing Home Association
Arkansas Health Care Association
Arizona Health Care Association
California Association of Health Facilities
Colorado Health Care Association
Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities
District of Columbia Health Care Association
Delaware Health Care Facilities Association
Florida Health Care Association
Georgia Health Care Association
Healthcare Association of Hawaii
Idaho Health Care Association
Illinois Health Care Association
Indiana Health Care Association
Iowa Health Care Association
Kansas Health Care Association
Kentucky Association of Health Care Facilities
Louisiana Nursing Home Association
Massachusetts Senior Care Association
Health Facilities Association of Maryland
Maine Health Care Association
Health Care Association of Michigan
Care Providers of Minnesota
Missouri Health Care Association

Mississippi Health Care Association
Nebraska Health Care Association
New Hampshire Health Care Association
Health Care Association of New Jersey
New Mexico Health Care Association
Nevada Health Care Association
New York State Health Facilities Association
North Carolina Health Care Facilities Association
North Dakota Long Term Care Association
Ohio Health Care Association
Care Providers of Oklahoma
Oregon Health Care Association
Pennsylvania Health Care Association
Rhode Island Health Care Association
South Carolina Health Care Association
South Dakota Health Care Association
Tennessee Health Care Association
Texas Health Care Association
Utah Health Care Association
Vermont Health Care Association
Virginia Health Care Association
Washington Health Care Association
West Virginia Health Care Association
Wisconsin Health Care Association
Wyoming Health Care Association

If your facility is a member of one of our state affiliates, then you're a member of AHCA/NCAL. Create your AHCA/NCAL Member Account today, and take advantage of your many member benefits!

Get Your AHCA/NCAL Username and Password at:
AHCANCAL.ORG/CREDENTIALS

AHCA/NCAL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

AHCA/NCAL is your national voice in Washington, D.C. We advocate on behalf of long term care providers before Congress, the Administration, and regulatory agencies such as CMS. We also deliver valuable member programs and resources designed to improve the lives of patients, residents, families, and staff.

Take Advantage of Your AHCA/NCAL Member Benefits!

ahcancalED

ahcancalED provides members access to premier on-line education, programs, resources and tools developed by leading experts for long term care professionals.

Visit www.educate.ahcancal.org

LTC TrendTracker

LTC TrendTracker is a free and powerful member benefit for AHCA/NCAL members to help identify key areas to address and set facility performance targets. It also assists in your AHCA/NCAL Quality Initiative and Quality Award journey.

Visit www.LTCTrendTracker.com

AHCA/NCAL Member Savings Program

Exclusive savings opportunities abound through AHCA/NCAL Member Savings Programs. Save on liability insurance, online job postings, geriatric nurse certification preparation, online dementia training, music and scent solutions, discounted shipping, utility audits, and more.

Visit www.ahcasavings.org or www.ncalsavings.org.

AHCA/NCAL Insurance Solutions

Providing employee health insurance is expensive, and AHCA/NCAL Insurance Solutions offers members exclusive discounts on a variety of life and health insurance benefits.

Visit www.ahcabenefits.org or www.ncalbenefits.org

AHCA/NCAL Publications

Another reliable staple for long term care professionals is the AHCA/NCAL Publications bookstore where the latest clinical, operations, compliance, and nurse aide training resources can be found, including the renowned Long Term Care Survey manual for nursing facilities.

Visit www.ahcapublications.org

National Quality Award Program

Inspiring excellence since 1996, the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award program, based on Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria, provides a proven framework that organizations can use to improve their overall quality of care, while gaining national recognition and external validation for the services they provide.

To learn more, visit www.ahcancal.org/qualityaward

The Quality Initiative

The Quality Initiative challenges skilled nursing and assisted living members to meet measurable goals in key areas that align with operational success and person-centered care, such as rehospitalizations and antipsychotic use. AHCA/NCAL provides tools and resources to help members achieve these goals.

For more about the initiative, including resources, visit www.ahcancal.org/qualityinitiative for skilled nursing or <http://qualityinitiative.ncal.org> for assisted living

Assisted Living Cost Calculator

The AL Cost Calculator is a web-based, enhanced resident assessment tool that allows assisted living providers (included with NCAL membership) to assess how costs are allocated across residents and communities.

Visit www.ALCostCalculator.org

Workforce Resource Center

The AHCA/NCAL Workforce Resource Center provides resources for LTC organizations and staff to improve overall workforce efforts, staff stability, and access to professional development.

Visit www.ahcancal.org/workforce

CNA Online Training Program

This Certified Nurse Assistant Training program is an online/blended program that provides flexibility, consistent quality of education, and convenient ways for students to learn.

Visit www.CNAonline.com

Gold Quality Award Achievers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3



Parker at Stonegate



George E. Wahlen Ogden Veterans Home

“Recently, in preparing for the change to PDPM, we used the criteria to create, deploy, and integrate a plan that will drive our operations,” Dunke says. “Our announcement of our Gold Quality Award resulted in record-breaking, organic social media engagement, positive media pickup, and health care partner and general community awareness.”

■ Parker at Stonegate. “The Baldrige criteria provide a guide for homes to develop systems and processes and identify opportunities for improvement, but more importantly, we learned how to utilize the criteria to help us understand and recognize the value of each process category and how they are interdependent on each other for our success,” says Catherine Martino, administrator.

Applying for the Gold Award had a positive impact on staff engagement



The Villages Rehabilitation and Nursing Center

from the very beginning because they all were included in the process, she says. “We created excitement around it. We learned how far staff and leaders were willing to broaden their thought processes and push themselves beyond what they thought was possible,” she says.

“The process makes people look critically at all different aspects of their work. We learned about things we’re really good at and what’s working, and we were able to drill down into things we could do better. It was very self-reflective and enlightening.”

■ George E. Wahlen Ogden Veterans Home. “The Baldrige criteria focus on evaluating and improving the effectiveness of our processes. This has had a significant impact on our mindset,” says Andrea Aston, director of social services. “Instead of sticking with what has always been done, we have turned our QAPI into a forum where we can be more innovative and improve or develop new processes,” she says. “We have also become much more proficient in looking at our data and utilizing it to enhance this process.”

Another key aspect was formalizing the informal. “We had to make sure all

of our systems were written down and concrete so everyone knew and was following the process,” she says. The strategic planning criteria, she says, have “really helped us to look toward future changes, for example, PDPM and phase 3 of the Requirements of Participation.”

■ The Villages Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. “The Quality Award journey helped tighten our strategic planning process. It helped us create strategic objectives that focus what is most important to us,” says CEO Debbie Brazill. She notes that her team started the process with a leg up. “A lot of the Baldrige criteria fell in line with what we were doing already, such as the use of root cause analyses for problem solving. As a result, we were able to achieve each level—Bronze, Silver, and Gold—on our first attempts,” she says.

Staff have been an important part of the process every step of the way, and they are very proud of their accomplishment. “Everyone wants to come to the awards ceremony at the AHCA convention, and we are designing t-shirts celebrating the award,” she says.

But they’re not interested in resting on their laurels. “Employees keep asking me what’s next,” Brazill says. “They want a new goal.” ✨

Partnerships, Planning, Communication, Kindness: Good Samaritan Models Successful Evacuation

“It was a huge team effort,” says Nate Schema, vice president of operations at the Good Samaritan Society. After the danger of Hurricane Dorian passed in Florida, more than 1,300 Good Samaritan residents safely returned to their homes in Daytona and Kissimmee.

“We started watching the path of the storm before it hit the state. We did everything we could to plan, and we prepared to mobilize resources at a moment’s notice,” he says.

Communication was key, Schema notes. “We were able to send out messages quickly. We set up an ‘800’ care number for family members to use,” he says. “This enabled us to focus on operations on the ground, while ensuring that families could still get the information they needed.”

The organization also connected with county managers and others in the community, and they had plans for every detail. “Our communication was really strong, but you can never emphasize communication enough. Everyone executing parts of the plan needs to get information quickly,” Schema says.

The organization was fortunate to have recently completed construction on several new buildings, and they were able to evacuate residents there. “Some of the residents said it was like going to a Marriott for a few days. We did everything possible to keep them comfortable and safe,” Schema says.

Good Samaritan leadership also made sure to take care of staff. “We enabled those without a support network to bring families with them. We were flexible in ensuring that they had loved ones with them if they couldn’t make other arrangements,” he says.

Having strong relationships with fellow long term care providers, as

well as others in the area, contributed to the success of the process, Schema says. “We were overwhelmed by the generosity we experienced. People rallied behind us,” he says. One area facility sent some vehicles to help evacuate residents more quickly.

At the same time, Schema and his team got resources and other information from the Florida Health Care Association (FHCA). “Every day there was a Florida provider call with FHCA and other leaders in the state that provided timely updates and resources,” he says.

As successful as the evacuation was, Schema notes that they learned some lessons. “We will do more planning drills moving into the next hurricane season,” he says.

At the same time, there are simple things that could make a world of difference, such as color-coded t-shirts or vests so you can identify people’s roles at a glance.”

The organization also expects to reinvest in its vehicles to make sure they can hold three to four wheelchairs. “We need to exhaust our resources and

do as much as possible on our own before requesting outside assistance,” he says.

“Our residents’ lives come first, and we made that crystal clear every step of the way,” Schema says. “We give our teams the support they need to handle these situations.” And supportive efforts didn’t stop after everyone was back home.

“We brought clinical resources in to conduct assessments and address issues promptly and make sure we didn’t miss anything,” he says. For staff, the company offered additional employee assistance programs so that people could reach out and get help as they needed it. They also worked to ensure that everyone had time to decompress and rest.

AHCA has a wide array of disaster planning resources, including a disaster preparedness blog at [AHCAPublications.org](https://ahcainc.org/publications). You can also find emergency preparedness materials, step-by-step guides, evacuation documents, best practices, and more when you browse the Disaster and Emergency Planning category of items. 🌟

Need Help with PDPM? We Have Your Back.

All hands on deck. The Patient-Driven Payment Model (PDPM) is here, and while providers have been preparing for months, the waters of change are still choppy.

However, you don’t have to go it alone or reinvent the wheel to ensure compliance and accurate, adequate reimbursement. AHCA has the tools, resources, and answers you need. You can find a wide selection of materials and

information at ahcainc.org/education (<https://ahcainc.org/education>).

AHCA also has a dedicated email address for members to ask questions related to PDPM. Send your inquiries to: pdpm@ahca.org.

Of course, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has considerable resources as well. Go to www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/SNFPPS/PDPM.html. 🌟

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AHCA/NCAL Announces Special Awards for 2019

AHCA has announced the recipients for the 2019 AHCA/NCAL Special Awards. Each year, the association recognizes the men and women who selflessly care for individuals in long term and post-acute care centers and communities. These honorees demonstrate selflessness and compassion.

■ ID/DD (Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities) Hero of the Year: Barbara Smith, Valley Village, Winnetka, Calif.

■ Not for Profit Program of the Year:

Good Samaritan Society - Ambassador, New Hope, Minn.

■ Not for Profit Trustee Award: Dave Gessel, Mission Health Services, West Valley City, Utah.

■ Adult Volunteer of the Year: Richard Cole, LACOPA Homes, Monett, Mo.

■ Young Adult Volunteer of the Year: Railey Connor, Crestview Health & Rehabilitation, Crestview, Fla.

■ National Assisted Living Week Program of the Year: Stone Hearth Estates, Gothenburg, Neb.

■ Group Volunteer of the Year: Friends of Good Samaritan Society - Scotland, Good Samaritan Society - Scotland, Scotland, S.D.

■ NCAL Noble Caregiver of the Year: Shirley Perdue, Richland Place Senior Living, Portland, Tenn.

■ NCAL Administrator of the Year: Jaclyn O'Keefe, Heritage Woods of Rockford, Rockford, Ill.

■ NCAL Assisted Living Nurse of the Year: John Walters, Dominican Village, Amityville, N.Y. ❄️

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