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MEMORANDUM

TO: RHCF Members

FROM: Elliott Frost, Senior Policy Analyst

DATE: December 16, 2008

SUBJECT: **5-Star Rating System**

ROUTE TO: Administrator, Department Heads

ABSTRACT: Talking points available on 5-Star nursing home rating system.

On Thursday December 18, 2008 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will roll-out its 5-Star Rating System on *Nursing Home Compare*. The rating system is based on information from the last three years of surveys and complaints, staffing information collected at survey and seven long-stay and three short-stay Quality Measures (QMs). It is anticipated that the distribution of facilities will have 20 percent of the facilities assigned the top rating of five stars, 70 percent assigned two, three or four stars and the remaining 10 percent assigned the lowest rating of one star. CMS will be issuing a press release on December 18 and *USA Today* is expected to run a story on the rating system later this week.

In anticipation of family and media inquiries, AAHSA has prepared the following talking points to help providers respond to possible questions or concerns:

- AAHSA believes there should be two types of nursing homes: the excellent and the non-existent. Quality should be an automatic public expectation.
- **We support a consumer-friendly nursing home rating system based on reliable quality information that the public can understand.**
- The five-star rating system is a **great idea prematurely implemented.**
- Together, government and providers must be responsible, transparent and accountable for taking care of vulnerable seniors. **CMS has key responsibility for defining, measuring and overseeing quality. Providers have the key responsibility in delivering quality.**
- **Data provided by the government must be accurate, reliable, timely, and friendly.**

- The rating system is based on **three pillars**:
 1. Clinical measures
 2. Staffing
 3. Inspections
- Clinical measures are the most mature data collected. The staffing component is a snapshot and requires much immediate work because staffing is the best proxy for quality. Inspection data is inconsistent.
- What needs to be improved about the Five-Star Rating system is:
 - Immediate development of a data collection tool around staffing.
 - Coordination of the rating system with the Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes campaign.
 - Overhaul of the survey and certification system with funding provided for a new system.
 - Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement that flow through directly for care giving. The dollars follow the caregiver should be the mantra.
- CMS and providers need to provide guidance to consumers on other factors like using a five-senses test when visiting a nursing home, relying on community reputation, observation of staff-resident interactions and availability of senior management to address resident and family concerns.

In addition, members needing guidance in responding to inquiries from the media should contact NYAHSA Communications Specialist, Kris Jensen Van-Heste at 518-449-2707, ext. 124 or by e-mail at kjvanheste@nyahsa.org

[Click here](#) to access the CMS informational document explaining how the ratings are calculated and providing the phone number of the 5-Star Helpline and a link to the rating system technical manual.

If you have questions or comments, please contact me at 518-449-2707, ext. 140 or via e-mail at efrost@nyahsa.org.