

February 2, 2024

Top Deficiencies Report - 4th Quarter 2023

Please see the most frequently cited deficiencies [report](#) from the fourth quarter of 2023.

Upcoming COMRU Training

The Central Office Medical Review Unit (COMRU) is hosting a **FREE** webinar concerning the online Level 1 Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) application process via Webex on **February 8, 2024, from 10:00 - 11:00 AM**. This webinar will cover the following topics:

- common errors requiring applications to be returned,
- what triggers a Level 2 screening on the application, and
- how to check the status of an online application.

To register to attend, please click [here](#). After you complete the registration, then, the week of the webinar, a meeting invitation will be forwarded to your email address.

HHS Office for Civil Rights Releases Visitation Guidance Resources

This week, the Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released the following materials pertaining to visitation guidance:

- [Patient Visitation FAQ Dear Colleague Letter](#) (Dated January 17, 2024)
- [FAQ on Patient Visitation at Certain Federally Funded Entities and Facilities](#)
- [Press Release](#) Regarding Obligations to Ensure Religious Non-Discrimination in Patient Visitation

The [letter](#) provides a reminder that CMS regulations, hospitals, and LTC facilities are subject to regulations that prohibit restricting, limiting, or otherwise denying visitation privileges based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, and are required to have written visitation

policies and procedures regarding such prohibitions.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

Navigating "Safety" in LTC Facilities: Separating the Roles of OSHA and the Life Safety Code for Fire Safety

OSHA's regulations overlap with CMS Federal and State requirements in many areas, most commonly with the Life Safety Code (LSC).

Fire Safety – Overview:

- LSC: Places a comprehensive emphasis on fire safety within the entire facility, including resident rooms, common areas, and corridors. It includes requirements for fire detection and alarm systems, fire-rated construction, and measures to prevent the spread of fire.
- OSHA: While OSHA has specific requirements for fire prevention and safety in the workplace, its focus is primarily on protecting employees. This includes guidelines for fire extinguishers, fire prevention plans, and employee training.

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What to Know About New Medicare Advantage Rules

As of January 1, 2024, Medicare Advantage (MA) plans are subject to new regulations governing prior authorizations and utilization management strategies. AHCA/NCAL, in partnership with Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, has developed a [checklist](#) to assist member providers in addressing MA denials to ensure that plans are in compliance with the new requirements. The checklist outlines items such as the appropriateness of the prior authorizations, medical necessity determinations, coverage criteria applied, denial process and provider recourse.

In addition, AHCA/NCAL will be hosting a [webinar](#) on **Tuesday, February 27 at 12 pm CST** on the topic. In the webinar, attorneys from Hooper, Lundy & Bookman will review regulatory limits on these activities, focusing on new and clarified requirements for 2024.

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Reimbursement Update

As previously reported, CMS has approved the State Plan Amendment (SPA) for the \$10 PPD rate increase and the \$.87 increase to the VBP incentive effective July 1, 2023. Mo Health Net Division (MHD) is working to get its emergency regulation filed and will begin going through its internal processes in order to timely institute the increases.

Please note, upon CMS approval of a SPA, it typically takes the state between 4-6 weeks to process the increase. An emergency regulation must be filed and approved.

Once the emergency regulation takes effect, which is approximately 10 days after it is filed, MHD can begin working on rate letters and other processes it must follow before paying the new rates. We anticipate facilities will receive their rate letters and begin being paid their new rate soon. We believe this may be mid to late February.

Once facilities begin receiving their new rate, MHD will begin to work on the retro payment back to July 1, 2023. We anticipate facilities will see the retro payment within 2 – 4 weeks after the new rate is paid. Please note, and as further explained below, the state will utilize the retro payment for the 7/1/23 \$10 PPD and VBP increase to offset any recoupments necessary as a result of decreases to rates for the semi-annual CMI/VBP adjustments on 1/1/23, 7/1/23 and 1/1/24.

As a reminder, MHD is waiting to release the January 1, 2024 rates for the semi-annual CMI/VBP adjustment and will combine the 1/1/24 rate adjustment notice in conjunction with the \$10 PPD and VBP increase notice letter at the same time. This should result in a smoother process for not only the state, but also facilities.

Once the 1/1/24 rate letter is released it will be inclusive of the \$10 PPD and VBP increase. Therefore, any adjustments upward or downward as a result of the 1/1/24 CMI/VBP will be part of the retro mass adjusted payment of the \$10 and increase in VBP incentive payment. We will keep you updated as we learn more.

Interoperability and Prior Authorization Rule Summary

In December 2022, CMS finalized the Interoperability and Prior Authorization Rule ([CMS-0057-F](#)). The rule aims to enhance the efficiency and transparency of patient data exchange. It mandates that impacted payers – including Medicare Advantage organizations, state Medicaid FFS programs, state CHIPS FFS programs, Medicaid managed care plans, CHIP managed care entities, and QHP issuers on the FFEs – must implement standardized Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) by January 1, 2027. These APIs will revolutionize how patients, providers, and payers interact with health care data and are positioned to improve care coordination.

In addition, the rule addresses the prior authorization process. Establishing specific requirements for streamlining these procedures, the rule aims to reduce administrative burdens and improve the timeliness of care delivery. These efforts are particularly relevant for the sector, where timely access to services and interventions can significantly influence patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

AHCA/NCAL has developed a [members-only summary](#) for reference.

Empowering LTC Providers in the Fight Against Respiratory Diseases with #GetVaccinated Resources

In the ever-evolving battle against respiratory diseases, LTC providers play a pivotal role in safeguarding the health of our most vulnerable populations. As rates of respiratory diseases remain high across the country, your ongoing efforts in encouraging vaccinations among residents and staff are more crucial than ever.

Residents in LTC communities are among those at the highest risk of severe disease and illness from common respiratory viruses, including the flu, RSV, and COVID-19.

The good news is that safe, effective, and accessible vaccines are available to protect these individuals from serious illness or even death.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

AHCA/NCAL to Host LTC Workshop Webinar Series

This year, AHCA/NCAL will hold a [webinar series](#) focused on workforce-related matters impacting long term care (LTC) providers across the country. This series will focus on issues including:

- Career ladders,
- Getting more youth interested in the LTC field, and
- Hiring immigrants and refugees.

During this series, attendees will hear directly from provider members – including AHCA/NCAL workforce committee members – and other experts on these matters and best practices from their experiences. It will also be an opportunity to get pressing questions answered. The first webinar in this series will occur on **Friday, March 1 at 2 pm CST** and is entitled “*Building the Path: Creating Careers in Long Term Care*”. Please click [here](#) to register.

Information will be shared on the other webinars throughout the year. For questions about this webinar series, please contact AHCA’s AVP of Workforce and Constituency Services, [Dana Ritchie](#), and AHCA’s Senior Director of Quality Improvement, [Urvi Patel](#).

AHCA/NCAL 2024 Membership Brochure

Please click [here](#) to view the 2024 AHCA/NCAL Membership Brochure, which showcases the benefits we receive as members of AHCA/NCAL.

Save the Date for Careers in Aging Month

In the past, AHCA/NCAL and providers across the country have celebrated Careers in Aging Week to bring recognition to the numerous career opportunities available in long term care and aging services and to celebrate current caregivers in the industry. In 2024, they are extending the celebration, and the month of March will now be dedicated to Careers in Aging month! You can join AHCA/NCAL in promoting these rewarding careers for the month-long observation.

Working in long term care provides endless opportunities, including the chance to serve one of our nation’s most vulnerable, special populations. The focus in these roles is on treating the whole person, not just a medical condition, and there is amazing potential for career advancement. Along with these benefits and more, working in the long term care community truly improves the lives of millions in positive and supportive work environments. A career in long term care brings a sense of purpose, turns residents and caregivers into family, and can be a great steppingstone to kickstart a successful career in health care.

During Careers in Aging Month, AHCA/NCAL will share stories, resources, and more. You can help them spread the word by retweeting on Twitter or sharing their posts on Facebook and using the hashtag #CareersinCaring. Learn more about [how you can participate](#) or visit www.careersinaging.com for more resources.

The Center of Excellence for Behavior Health in Nursing Facilities

Beginning September 2023, the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities (COE-NF) has hosted six (6) one-hour monthly cohort sessions. **These sessions are FREE to attend!** Join them for the opportunity to learn industry best practices from other nursing facilities and behavioral health subject matter experts. With the support of COE-NF behavioral health specialists, you will be able to implement the learnings in your facility. The last cohort session is:

February 15, 2024: De-escalating Behavior

Please see the [flyer](#) and [register here](#).

(READ MORE)

Assisted Living Webinar Series - The New Generation and the Challenges they Face

Assisted Living is going through a period of change. Is your facility ready? This webinar series, led by Speaker Barbara Speedling, will discuss topics including caring for the new generation in assisted living, overcoming social isolation and loneliness, preventing resident-to-resident aggression, and leadership in a transformative culture. AHCA/NCAL members can purchase individual webinars for \$25 each, or bundle and save by purchasing all four webinars now at the discounted rate of \$90.

- **Wednesday, April 17 at 1 pm CST – [Caring for a New Generation in Assisted Living](#)**
 - **Wednesday, June 12 at 1 pm CST – [All by Myself: Overcoming Social Isolation and Loneliness in Assisted Living](#)**
 - **Wednesday, August 14 at 1 pm CST – [Love Your Neighbor: Preventing Resident-to-Resident Aggression](#)**
 - **Wednesday, October 16 at 1 pm CST – [Metamorphosis: Leadership in a Transformative Culture](#)**
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CNA Testing Events

All regional dates are viewable on the online calendar at <https://mo.tmutest.com/calendar>. **IMPORTANT** – these are not the only test sites available. If you need a different testing location, please call Headmaster D&S (1-800-393-8664) and ask for the Missouri Team.

PLEASE NOTE: There have been changes to scheduling tests through TMU and to the paperwork for RN Observers. Please reach out to Headmaster with questions. missouri@hdmaster.com.

Knowledge and Skill testing is available February 12 and March 11 at MHCA. Please contact shellie@mohealthcare.com to reserve a time slot.

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