



Center for Clinical Standards and Quality/Survey & Certification Group

Admin Info: 16-07-ALL

DATE: November 6, 2015

TO: State Survey Agency Directors

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: Proposed Webinar Pilot via Blackboard Collaborate for State and Regional Office (RO) Use

Memorandum Summary

Proposed Webinar Pilot: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will conduct a pilot for Blackboard Collaborate as a webinar platform for State and RO use to provide training and collaboration opportunities for State and federal surveyors. Four States and three ROs have been selected to participate in the pilot of Blackboard Collaborate.

Background

In an effort to assist and improve collaboration and provide consistent, quality training to State and federal surveyors, CMS proposed Blackboard Collaborate as a convenient and reliable stand-alone, online webinar learning solution. The use of this platform will allow both States and Regions to facilitate and host their own webinars for learning, meetings, and training purposes, while using the platform as both an educational and collaboration tool.

Blackboard Collaborate is an online portal that connects geographically dispersed audiences in one-on-one or group webinar sessions. The sessions will enable all participants to interact via video and audio dialogue. A session may be easily recorded for viewing at a later time. Blackboard Collaborate easily integrates with Blackboard Learn to connect learners for live interaction during online courses.

Benefits

Blackboard Collaborate has numerous benefits that will allow the States and ROs to leverage time and distance when communicating with surveyors and with each other. Benefits of using the Blackboard Collaborate platform are:

- use of a synchronous platform to host meetings, presentations, and training at no cost;
- ability to reach surveyors and staff who may be geographically dispersed;
- use of voice over internet protocol (VoIP) and a teleconference line for interactive sessions;
- ability to implement engaging interaction including chat, white board, polling, and participant feedback tools;
- use of web tour feature for guided demonstration of other systems and platforms;
- ability to host and facilitate unique sessions;
- ability to easily record sessions for viewing at a later time;
- no additional login or password needed for access; and,
- accessible across platforms including PCs, Macs, and mobile devices.

Proposed Pilot

The following States and ROs have been selected to participate in the pilot: Alaska, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Texas; and ROs II, IV, and IX. Each entity has been asked to choose two individuals as the leads or point of contact for the pilot. The selected entities must verify that their computer systems meet the minimal technical specifications required to operate Blackboard Collaborate. Particular attention should be paid to the Java version requirements. Each entity's IT department will be responsible for providing assistance with general computer-related support. The Distance Learning Products (DLP) team who support the Blackboard SCG Training contract will provide assistance with the Blackboard Collaborate application.

The pilot will start in the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and will conclude in the third quarter of FY 2016. At the start of the pilot, the State and RO leads will be required to participate in formal training on Blackboard Collaborate. An orientation session to discuss the logistics of the pilot program will be held in November and four one-hour sessions on Collaborate Essentials will be provided in November and December. The training will be provided virtually and hosted by the DLP team. The selected States and ROs must commit to minimally hosting and facilitating two webinars for their surveyors during the pilot period, January to March 2016.

During the pilot, the leads from the selected States and ROs will be part of a workgroup to provide feedback and comments based on their use of Blackboard Collaborate. The feedback from the workgroup will be used to validate the feasibility, usability, and efficiency of implementing Blackboard Collaborate nationally for all interested States and ROs.

Technical Specifications

Prior to the initial use of Blackboard Collaborate, all participants should run a computer check to ensure they are able to access the Collaborate platform properly. Each selected State and RO is responsible for ensuring that their computer systems meet the technical specifications in order to successfully access the Blackboard Collaborate platform. Minimum technical specifications for Blackboard Collaborate 12.6 are listed below, where the following definitions apply:

- **Certified:** fully tested and supported.
- **Compatible:** partially tested and supported.
- **Provisional:** untested but supported.
- **Unsupported:** not supported.

Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing Windows and Browser Specifications

| | Internet Explorer 8 | Internet Explorer 9 | Internet Explorer 10 | Internet Explorer 11 | Microsoft Edge | Firefox (Latest Release) | Chrome (Stable Channel) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Windows® XP (32 bit with 32 bit JVM only) | Compatible | Certified | Unsupported | Unsupported | Unsupported | Compatible | Compatible |
| Windows Vista® | Compatible | Certified | Unsupported | Unsupported | Unsupported | Compatible | Compatible |
| Windows 7 | Compatible | Certified | Provisional | Certified | Unsupported | Certified | Certified |
| Windows 8 | Unsupported | Unsupported | Certified | Certified | Unsupported | Certified | Certified |
| Windows 10 | Unsupported | Unsupported | Unsupported | Unsupported | Certified | Certified | Certified |

Supported Java Versions

| Operating System | Java Versions (JRE) |
|------------------------|--|
| Windows XP, Vista, 7,8 | Java SE 6U13 or higher, Java SE 7 Java Access Bridge 2.0.2 |
| Mac OS X | Apple Java 1.6.0_07 + (J2SE6-64 bit) Oracle Java 1.7 See known issues |
| Linux | Java SE 6U13 or higher & Java SE 7 64 bit JVM's with 64 bit Operating Systems |

Note: 32 bit operating systems require a 32 bit JVM, 64 bit operating systems require a 64 bit JVM.

Additional Requirements:

- 256 MB RAM
- 20 MB free disk space
- Internet Access - 28.8 kbps speed or above (Broadband connection highly recommended)
- Soundcard with microphone and headphones (Headset with microphone/headphone highly recommended)
- Webcam (optional)

Note: Thin client solutions such as Citrix Metaframe are **not** supported with Collaborate.

Effective Date: Immediately. The information contained in this memorandum should be communicated with all survey and certification staff, their managers and the State/Regional Office training coordinators within 30 days of this memorandum.

Contact: For questions regarding this memorandum, please contact the SCG Webinar team at scgwebinars@cms.hhs.gov.

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management
Regional Training Administrators
State Training Coordinators
Informational Technology Departments (Alaska, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas, and
Regional Offices II, IV, IX)