



**Center for Clinical Standards and Quality/Survey & Certification Group**

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**Admin Info: 16-17-ALL**

**DATE:** March 4, 2016

**TO:** State Survey Agency Directors

**FROM:** Director  
Survey and Certification Group

**SUBJECT:** National Downtime of the Quality Improvement and Evaluation System (QIES)  
and the Automated Survey Processing Environment System (ASPEN)

**Memorandum Summary**

- **QIES and ASPEN Systems** – Will be unavailable from March 16 through March 21, 2016
- **Electronic Plan of Correction (ePOC)** – Will not be available for providers or suppliers or Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) users during the same time. There will be limited access for State Survey Agencies.

**Background**

The QIES system is used by providers to submit assessment information such as the Minimum Data Set (MDS) for nursing homes and OASIS for home health agencies. QIES is also used by State Survey Agencies and staff at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to produce reports on assessment information and survey status of providers and suppliers. ASPEN is used to collect and manage survey and enforcement information. ASPEN is used in State Agencies and CMS. Some State Survey Agencies provide the ePOC capability to send survey reports and receive plans of correction from providers and suppliers.

**National Downtime**

**QIES Availability**

An extended QIES national downtime begins on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 8:00 p.m. EST and is planned to end Monday, March 21, 2016 at 11:59 p.m. EST. All QIES national systems will be down during this time. Users will not be able to connect to any QIES national systems, including the submissions systems and CASPER/QW Reporting.

### **ASPEN Availability**

- ASPEN will be available for use by state agencies during this extended downtime, but with a number of restrictions described in the attached document.
- CMS Regional and Central office users will not have ASPEN access except for the stand-alone, mobile components of ASPEN: ASE-Q, QIS, and STAR. A table in the attached document summarizes the general access level for each ASPEN application during the QIES national extended downtime.

### **ePOC Availability**

- During the extended QIES downtime, ePOC will not be available for providers or CMS RO/CO users and will be limited for state users. Thus, to meet the 10-day standards for POC processing, states may consider sending Statement of Deficiency information and receiving POC outside of the ePOC system not only for nursing home surveys created during the extended downtime, but also for those created just before it.
- For additional details, please refer to the ePOC States Considerations section of the *Extended Downtime for National Systems Memo* attachment.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the QTSO Help Desk at [help@qtso.com](mailto:help@qtso.com) or 1 (888) 477-7876.

**Effective Date:** The downtime will begin at 8pm EST on Wednesday, March 16 and end at 11:59pm on Monday, March 21, 2016. This policy should be communicated with all survey and certification staff, their managers and the State/Regional Office QIES State coordinators immediately.

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

Attachment – Extended Downtime of National Systems

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management