



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

**Admin Info: 17-30-NH**

**DATE:** September 11, 2017  
**TO:** State Survey Agency Directors  
**FROM:** Director  
Survey and Certification Group  
**SUBJECT:** Implementation of Long-Term Care Survey Process (LTCSP) – Software  
Sandbox and Installation

**Memorandum Summary**

- **LTSCP software practice:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will be making a practice version of the software and related training materials available for surveyors on September 11, 2017. To be able to use this software, Regions and States need to ensure certain configurations, user accounts, and action items to gain access.
- **Timeline for LTCSP deployment and Transition:** The production version of the LTCSP software will be released on November 18, 2017. At that time, States will be able to access and create survey shells for the new LTC Survey Process and perform mock surveys. Surveys of record for the new LTC Survey Process must not occur until November 28, 2017.

**A. Purpose**

CMS is communicating and clarifying timeframes related to the implementation of the software and actions needed between September 2017 and November 2017 to continue a proactive approach for preparation and implementation of the new survey process. The information below describes the timeline and expected activities for implementation. Detailed information related to the preparation steps below are provided in the materials presented during the recent LTCSP Technical Training in Longmont, Colorado. These materials are also available on the QTSO website under the LTCSP section.

**B. Readiness for Software Deployment (August 18 – September 11, 2017)**

State Coordinators and/or other State Technical staff attending the LTCSP Technical Training in Longmont Colorado received a flash drive containing:

- Full Install of the LTCSP/ASE-Q software known as the “Sandbox” environment (this is a practice version that is not connected to the larger ASPEN system). Surveyors will need the full install if they do not currently have ASE-Q on their laptop/tablet.
- Thin install of the LTCSP/ASE-Q Sandbox software (or just the “Sandbox” environment for users that have laptops or tablets with the current ASE-Q version (10.7.0) installed).
- Computer Based Training (CBT) files in .exe format. These are the executable files that surveyors are reviewing as part of the surveyor training. If your State is unable to run the

CBT executables, please contact the ASPEN Help Desk. (1-800-659-4626, [Helpdesk@AlpineTG.com](mailto:Helpdesk@AlpineTG.com))

- The Technical Training Workbook and supporting documents containing installation instructions and software-specific scenarios.

**NOTE:** If states have older versions of ASE-Q installed (prior to 10.7.0), they should contact the ASPEN Helpdesk to ensure they are following the correct steps for uninstalling the old software version prior to the new install.

When State Coordinators and State Technical staff return to the office from LTCSP Technical Training, they should take the following actions:

- If needed, work with users to create ASE-Q/LTCSP accounts in ACO with the correct privileges to access LTCSP. Surveyors must be in the ACO Staff Directory and have *Assessment* selected under ASE-Q Access Levels. This process is described in the ASE-Q SET-UP AND SECURITY packet of the training documents from Longmont.
- Laptops or tablets running LTCSP software must have the .Net 4.6.1 or higher version installed
- Develop procedures for managing ongoing ASE-Q software updates. The ASPEN auto-update feature is recommended, or other state specific methodologies can be used.
- Install Sandbox on all surveyor and trainer machines using either the full install or thin install provided on the flash drives distributed during Technical Training. Use the normal processes for deploying ASPEN updates.
- Utilize LTCSP State Checklist received at the LTCSP Technical Training to help prepare and setup tablets/laptops for the LTCSP implementation.

**NOTE:** Port 8443 needs to be opened for use by the LTCSP application in order to use Wired or Wireless data sharing. If state laptop configurations have use of this port restricted by any firewall software used on the tablet, it will need to be opened in order to perform Wired or Wireless data sharing. Contact the ASPEN Help Desk if there are any questions/concerns about these actions.

### **C. Sandbox Software is Deployed (September 11- November 17, 2017)**

#### **I. What is the Sandbox?**

The Sandbox release is an official release of the ASE-Q software with the LTCSP software that allows surveyors to practice using LTCSP without affecting other survey and certification operations. Most components of LTCSP are available to assist in learning the system except for the data sharing function. The Sandbox version of the LTCSP application is not the final production of the software, and there will be minor updates as described below. This version contains functionality available as of 8/1/17, and will continue to be tested and updated to ensure maximum functionality in November. A description of expected updates are below.

#### **II. When will the Sandbox be available?**

The full and thin installs of the LTCSP Sandbox were delivered during the August/September Technical Training, but in order to access the LTCSP software, a user must also download at least one of the three official training shells. The shells will be available on the QTSO website at: <https://www.qtso.com/> for download on September 11, 2017 by selecting the LTCSP link from the left navigation bar.



LTCSP Link on QTSO

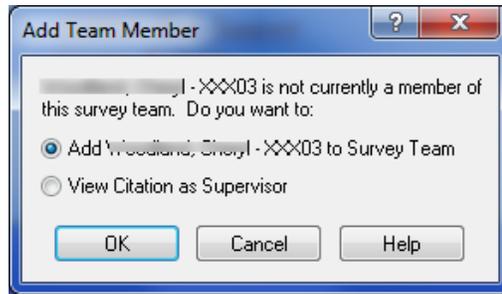
### III. How can Surveyors Access the sandbox?

There are three survey shells that will be provided that can be used to access the LTCSP software in ASE-Q. Each shell has a different purpose:

1. **Technical training survey shell (Sandbox Shell 1.zip)** – created to align with software-specific scenarios provided in the LTCSP Training Workbook 2017. The focus of this shell is understanding the software with exercises to better prepare surveyors on various areas of the software through additional knowledge and practice experience.
2. **Survey process shell (Sandbox Shell 2.zip)** - created to integrate the survey process and software with specific functions and activities to help guide the surveyor through the process. A New LTC Survey Process Workbook will accompany this shell. The focus of this shell is to support surveyor training. It may take between 4-6 hours to complete the training associated with this shell. Do not confuse the *New LTC Survey Process Workbook* with the *LTC Survey Procedure Guide* received at LTC Surveyor Training. The Workbook is intended to be used to guide practice in the Sandbox.
3. **A blank shell (Sandbox Shell 3.zip).** - This shell can be used for additional practice. It includes one MDS resident that is not offsite selected and no offsite data will be loaded or available. This shell can be used to practice onsite activities (interviews, sample selection, investigation). The existence of at least one MDS resident is required in the sandbox version of the software only (in order to be able to add new residents to the survey), this will be remedied in the production version of LTCSP.

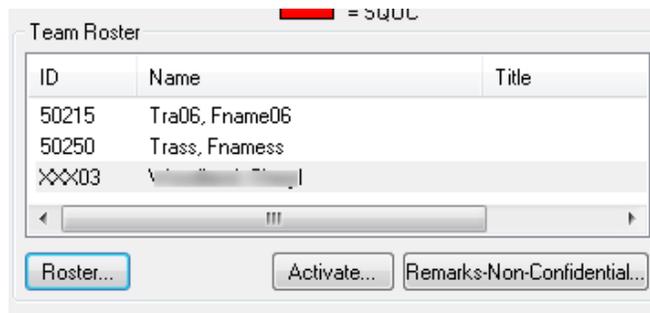
A. The following steps explain how to load a survey shell and access LTCSP:

- Start the ASE-Q program.
- Log into ASE-Q using your Windows Login pin:
  - If prompted, load a user account file created in ACO with the correct permissions and login information.
- Click the Import button in ASE-Q and load one of the 3 provided shells described above.
- Locate the survey in the ASE-Q tree.
- Open Citation Manager:
- Right-click the survey and select Citation Manager.
- Select the radio button to add yourself to the survey team.

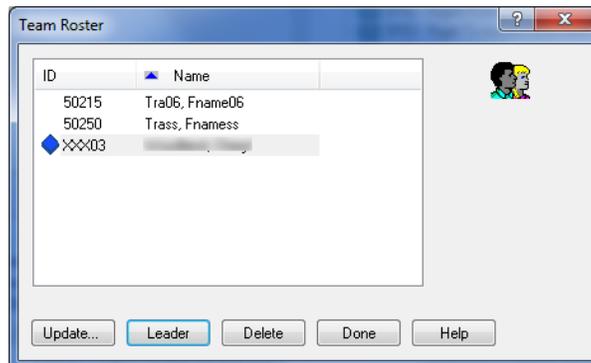


Make yourself the team leader.

- In the Citation Manager, select Roster.



- In the Team Roster, select your name and click the Leader button.



- If testing with a team, set up the survey team the same on all team member machines and set one surveyor as the leader.
- Click the LTC button to access the LTCSP software.



**NOTES:**

- If needed, refer to LTCSP Training Workbook 2017 provided during the technical training.
- If the LTC button is disabled, ensure you are a member of the survey team and that your User Account file has the correct security settings for access.
- Internet connectivity is not required to utilize the Sandbox.

#### **IV. What areas will not be functioning in the sandbox shells?**

- A. With some remaining areas of LTCSP under development, surveyors should be aware of the following limitations when practicing in the Sandbox:

##### Entrance Conference

- Items requested in the Entrance Conference have been updated.

##### Investigations

- The pathway links are not functional. The pathways are integrated into the software; however, links that would open up a separate screen as a .pdf are still under development.

##### Facility Tasks

- Not all the pathway links are functional. The pathways are integrated into the software; however, links that would open up a separate screen as a .pdf are still under development.
- On the Med Administration Observation handwriting screen, the erase button can get stuck. To resolve, exit LTCSP and restart.
- If adding a new admission resident, ensure an admission date was entered for the resident to prevent an error.

##### Reports

- Not all reports are available
- Available reports are drafts
- After importing first survey shell, the reports section will give an error if you don't exit ASE-Q and restart.

##### Team Meeting Screen

- Agenda items are not final, changes have been made since this version of the software was created.
- Screen is showing all available options; agenda items can be responded to with a checkbox, notes, or as system-calculated fields. The specific agenda items and types are not finalized.
- Screen is updateable by all team members. In the final version, the team meeting screen will only be updateable by the team leader.
- Screen may get stuck on Day 2 and not toggle back to Day 1. To resolve, exit LTCSP and restart.

##### Data Sharing

- We do not recommend full data sharing with the sandbox. While some data sharing is possible, not all fields will be transferred because not all tables, fields, and rules have been implemented to account for when one surveyor's data would override another.

##### Workload

- The workload counts may be off if removing and re-adding investigations.

#### **V. Can States use the Sandbox to Conduct Mock Surveys?**

##### **Mock Surveys Using the Sandbox before November 18, 2017**

There are different approaches for practicing with the sandbox version of the software. While we expect most of the practice to occur offsite, some states have asked whether or not a mock survey could be conducted with a willing facility.

The sandbox will not be available to conduct a full mock survey prior to November 18, 2017 for two reasons: 1) States cannot generate survey shells for a facility that would include the offsite sub-group, and 2) the data sharing between survey team members is not complete and could cause confusion.

If the State decides to conduct a mock survey using the sandbox and the blank shell, surveyors would only be able to practice individually with the software, and all residents must be added manually into the LTCSP software. No facility rates or offsite selected residents will exist, so a SA will not be able to completely replicate the initial pool or data sharing process as outlined in the LTC Survey Procedure Guide.

Under the following circumstances, a state could practice the process using all onsite selected residents for the initial pool if:

- 1) Information is shared in advance with CMS Central and Regional Office and any feedback from the survey is provided following the survey.
- 2) Facility clearly understands that it is a mock survey and that they are not accountable for Phase 2 requirements in advance of the 11/28 effective date.
- 3) Surveyors use the blank shell to perform the survey and conduct the survey activities.
- 4) Surveys are announced in advance to the facility administrator.

### **What are some suggestions for surveyor practice?**

Sandbox Shell 2.zip will be a practice shell for surveyors, and will have accompanying scenarios and workbook. Regional/State trainers may want to use this to assist in ensuring surveyor competency with the various survey functions. The scenario document released will use a sample survey to take a surveyor from offsite to end of survey except for data sharing.

The scenarios are expected to take 4 to 6 hours to complete, and the Regional/State trainer has flexibility in how they work with surveyors to complete this. Along with the survey shell, the surveyor will need to download the New LTC Survey Process Workbook and the LTC Survey Process Screens document from the QTSO website. They will need their machine (laptop or tablet) with the sandbox version of ASE-Q installed, and a valid user account file with the correct security setting to access LTCSP. Also available on the QTSO website will be a completed facility matrix and sample size grid to help them with their sample selection.

The scenario workbook will have questions throughout to assure that the surveyors understand the process with answers at the end. We tried to make the shell as realistic as possible and added residents with complaints, new admissions, etc. so they understand all the sub groups and how to work with them.

We encourage States to allow for surveyor time to review and practice with these materials to ensure that they are ready to complete the new LTC Survey Process. There is not a formal skills assessment or sign-off; however, we encourage Regional/State trainers to ensure that there are some key components that surveyors can complete.

- Importing & Exporting Shells
- Offsite Selection
- Entrance Conference
- Screening Process

- Initial Pool
- Sample Selection
- Investigations
- Facility Tasks
- Knowledge of Revised F-Tags Regulations/Interpretive Guidance

**VI. What are some other considerations for this time period?**

QIS states that want to conduct QIS surveys between 11/20 and 11/28 should plan on creating and exporting the shells prior to 11/18. Also, Traditional states that are using ASE-Q and want to conduct traditional surveys between 11/20 and 11/28 should plan on creating and exporting the shells prior to 11/18.

**D. Final Production Software Deployment and Transition Issues and Timeline**

(after November 18, 2017)

The production version of the LTCSP software will be deployed along with the November ASPEN Maintenance Update; version 11.0 of ACO.

States should finish up QIS/Traditional Standard Surveys (no QIS or traditional shells can be created with a survey start date on or after November 27, 2017.)

**Mock Surveys with the Production-Grade software after November 18, 2017**

The Production- Grade Software will be released on November 18, 2017. The data-sharing functionality is expected to be deployed at that time. A state may choose to conduct a mock survey with willing facilities using the production grade software. After November 18, 2017, Regions or States can create their own mock surveys in ACO and export shells to be used in LTCSP. Because it is the production (i.e., final) software, these shells will contain a resident list, the offsite selected residents based on the MDS data, and also include facility rates.

If a state chooses to conduct a mock survey **between November 18 and 27, 2017**, that would be permissible under the following circumstances:

- 1) Information is shared with CMS Central and Regional Office.
- 2) The facility clearly understands that it is a mock survey and that they are not accountable for Phase 2 requirements in advance of the November 28, 2017 effective date.
- 3) Surveys are announced in advance to the facility Administrator.
- 4) The survey team deletes the mock survey before it is uploaded to ACO/ARO.

If a state chooses to conduct a mock survey **on November 28, 2017 or after instead of conducting a survey of record**, that is also permissible and we would ask that this information be shared with the CMS Regional Office Ambassador. A mock survey would not count towards meeting the survey interval or average.

**NOTE;** QIS states that want to conduct QIS surveys between 11/20 and 11/28 should plan on creating and exporting the shells prior to 11/18. Also, Traditional states that are using ASE-Q, and want to conduct traditional surveys between 11/20 and 11/28 should plan on creating and exporting the shells prior to 11/18.

#### November 27, 2017

On the evening of 11/18/17, the QIS software will be deactivated.

- At this point all Federal recertification surveys will be configured to support the LTCSP.
- The capability to create new QIS surveys will be turned off (except as described below).

The ASPEN System will continue to support:

- Existing in progress QIS or traditional surveys that began prior to November 27, 2017
- Revisits for QIS or traditional surveys
- RO Comparative surveys for a QIS or traditional survey

QIS/Traditional Recertification surveys must not start on November 27, 2017. We recommend that States use that day for other survey and certification activities such as an all-surveyor call to review high-level materials and answer questions, complete separate complaint investigations, or remaining follow-up activities from prior surveys.

#### November 28, 2017

Potential Mock Survey data conducted between November 18 and 27, 2017 will be identified and states will be contacted to confirm and remove the data.

Shells for upcoming recertification surveys can be created using new software.

Survey teams begin surveying under new LTCSP software.

Any previously scheduled QIS surveys starting after 11/27/17 will be updated and the QIS indicator will be removed.

#### **Where can I get more information, raise concerns or get my questions answered?**

- ASPEN Help Desk – for ASPEN software challenges (1-800-659-4626, [Helpdesk@AlpineTG.com](mailto:Helpdesk@AlpineTG.com))
- QTSO Help Desk – for CASPER, MDS, and other software challenges (1-888-477-7876)
- All State QIES & ASPEN Technical Call (monthly) - for technical concerns that need to be discussed across States/Regions
- AHFSA/CMS LTC Call – (monthly) – for policy/process issues that need to be discussed across States/Regions
- CMS NH Survey Development mailbox – for policy or survey process questions [nhsurveydevelopment@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:nhsurveydevelopment@cms.hhs.gov)
- Surveyor Training Website –for Courses on LTC Guidance (SME Videos) <https://surveyortraining.cms.hhs.gov/>
- Computer-Based Training Modules – self-paced interactive webinars
- CMS Website for Interpretive Guidance, F-tags, and process overview- <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/GuidanceforLawsAndRegulations/Nursing-Homes.html>

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**Contact:** We understand that the proposed changes may have a significant impact on States and Regions. Any feedback and questions you may have can be sent to [NHSurveyDevelopment@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:NHSurveyDevelopment@cms.hhs.gov).

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

/s/

David R. Wright

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management