

Implementation of Dialysis Facility Compare Star Rating System

The Medicare Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC) website is a service of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that has become a major information resource for patients with end stage renal disease (ESRD) on finding detailed information on Medicare-certified dialysis facilities. Originally launched in 2001 and mandated by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, DFC currently features 11 measures on approximately 6,000 Medicare-certified dialysis facilities. CMS plans to introduce star ratings on DFC as part of our plan to feature star ratings on all of our Compare websites to make it easier for consumers to compare and select dialysis facilities.

CMS presented information on the Star Rating System for dialysis facilities to the public during a national provider call in July. We listened to feedback from stakeholders and encouraged them to submit written comments to CMS. In response to this feedback, CMS has decided to implement the Star Rating System for dialysis facilities in January 2015 to allow more time for consumer education about appropriate use of the ratings for making decisions about treatment. Implementing the Star Rating system for dialysis facilities in January will also give dialysis facilities extra time to review their ratings and fine tune verification and correction processes for data submission to DFC.

Prior to launching the DFC Star Rating System, we will provide a variety of consumer educational activities, including:

- **An Open Door Forum** that will provide background on the Compare website star rating initiative, the development of star ratings for DFC, the difference between star ratings and QIP, and the strengths and limitations of star ratings in making treatment decisions.
- **Consumer group informational sessions** that will provide ready-to-use information on how to use the stars to inform treatment decisions, including the strengths and limitations of stars.
- **Direct consumer outreach** to put information in the hands of consumers through the many ways they receive health care information, including newspapers, the internet, and other sources.

CMS is committed to working with stakeholders in implementing the star ratings for Dialysis Facility Compare. We will continue to partner with the ESRD community to ensure that consumers have information they can easily understand and use to make important health care decisions.

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