

Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

Ref: S&C-07-36

**DATE:** September 14, 2007  
**TO:** State Survey Agency Directors  
**FROM:** Director  
Survey and Certification Group  
**SUBJECT:** Release of Report “Study of Paid Feeding Assistant Programs”

**Memorandum Summary**

- Announces the release of the “Study of Paid Feeding Assistant Programs” report and Web site location.

**Background**

On September 26, 2003, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a Federal Register (FR) notice enabling long-term care facilities to use paid feeding assistants to supplement the services of nursing assistants during mealtimes. Paid feeding assistants, as defined by the Federal rule, were to be used only with residents who did not have complicated feeding problems. The regulation, “Requirements for Paid Feeding Assistants in Long-term Care Facilities” (68 FR 55528), had two immediate goals:

- To increase the availability of staff during mealtimes; and
- To mandate minimum training and supervision standards for paid feeding assistant programs.

Various stakeholder groups raised concerns about the new law’s implications for resident care and safety, and for staffing configurations. In June 2004, as a result of concerns raised, the CMS and the Agency for Health Care Quality and Research (AHRQ) sponsored a nationwide two-phase study to gain an understanding of the characteristics of paid feeding assistant programs. The report, “Study of Paid Feeding Assistant Programs,” is now available at <http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/FeedAssist.pdf>. This report provides:

- A description of the degree of implementation of paid feeding assistant programs nationally;
- The characteristics of and design of these programs; and
- The effect paid feeding assistants have had on the quality of care in nursing homes.

### **Phase I Report Findings**

The study found that paid feeding assistant programs are generally regarded as an improvement in resident dining with no significant concerns noted and there was little to no variation in quality of assistance provided by paid feeding assistants versus that provided by nursing assistants. Further, the report reveals staffing configurations have not changed since most facilities recruit existing non-nursing facility staff to function as a paid feeding assistant.

### **Action Steps**

The CMS initiated strategic actions based on the findings and recommendations in this report. We created and delivered satellite training for nursing home providers to assist them with the implementation of paid feeding assistant programs in their facilities. The satellite broadcast, "How to Enhance the Quality of Dining Assistance in Nursing Homes," aired in March 2007 and remains accessible on the CMS internet streaming Web site (<http://cms.internetstreaming.com>).

CMS issued surveyor interpretive guidelines and an investigative protocol as well as Power Point training to explain the regulatory mandates. This is available on the Survey & Certification Policy & Memos Webpage as S&C-07-30 released August 10, 2007.

For questions about this memorandum, please contact Susan Joslin at 410-786-3516 or via email at [susan.joslin@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:susan.joslin@cms.hhs.gov).

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management