CMS Announces New Recruitment for the Hospice Outcomes & Patient Evaluation (HOPE) Beta Test

CMS, as part of their overarching initiative to advance hospice quality, has contracted with Abt Associates and its partners to develop, modify, and test a draft hospice patient assessment instrument, called Hospice Outcomes & Patient Evaluation (HOPE). The HOPE Beta Test is in progress, and currently, CMS and Abt Associates are recruiting additional hospice providers to participate in the beta test, with an abbreviated timeline for data collection.

Medicare-certified hospice providers are invited to participate. We are seeking hospice providers with sufficient registered nurse, social worker, and chaplain staffing to conduct at least 1 – 2 joint visits per week. For joint visits, two registered nurses visit one patient at the same time to complete the HOPE nurse assessment. Two social workers visit the patient at the same time to complete the HOPE social work assessment, and two chaplains visit the patient at the same time to complete the HOPE chaplain assessment. One of the two registered nurses, social workers and chaplains may attend their joint visit via video call, such as Zoom. HOPE assessments are completed at hospice admission, for symptom reassessment and at live discharge.

Recruitment will continue until we reach the desired number of participants. We anticipate training for the beta test will begin in mid-July. As soon as training is completed, the hospice teams begin completing HOPE assessments with patients and caregivers who provide verbal consent to participate. Data collection will begin in July when training is completed and continue until the target number of HOPE assessments are completed, which we anticipate will be early fall 2022.

The HOPE Beta Test is the final phase of HOPE testing to confirm the assessment item feasibility, reliability and validity. The Abt team will provide guidelines, materials and directions, and dedicated support for beta test implementation at your hospice.

Background

The Hospice Quality Reporting Program (HQRP)\(^1\) was established by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. The Act requires that the Secretary establish quality reporting requirements for hospice programs. Currently, part of the requirement relies on patient medical record abstraction to satisfy the Hospice Item Set (HIS) portion of the HQRP. The HIS data are used in calculation of hospice process quality measures.

The planned future hospice assessment, HOPE, is a multidisciplinary patient-centered instrument that supports patient choice. At a minimum, the data from HOPE will be used to support the HQRP for quality measures, hospice providers for care planning, and patients, families, and caregivers for engaging in the hospice care. Therefore, your participation in the beta test is a vital part of HOPE instrument development. Results from the

\(^1\) For more information about the HQRP, please see the HQRP website at: [https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Hospice-Quality-Reporting/index.html](https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Hospice-Quality-Reporting/index.html)
beta test will inform CMS’s proposal for HOPE data collection in hospice rulemaking, and when approved, will be followed by national implementation of HOPE.

Eligibility and Requirements

Medicare-certified hospice providers are eligible to participate in the HOPE beta test. **Participation in the HOPE beta test is completely voluntary. Providers who do not wish to participate will not be penalized in any way.**

What Does Testing Involve?

Hospice providers that participate in the beta test will receive ongoing, individualized support from the Abt HOPE testing team, and will be required to:

- Identify 1 – 2 staff members, such as clinical managers, education, or quality coordinators to be the **hospice site liaisons**. This is the primary point person at your hospice who is responsible for a) communication and coordination with the Abt testing team and b) coordinating beta test training for your hospice staff, and c) tracking patient enrollment and assessments completed to ensure data collection targets are met, and d) meeting every other week with the Abt testing team to review progress, and manage any issues encountered.

- **Identify at least 6-8 registered nurses, 4 social workers, and 4 chaplains/spiritual care counselors,** who routinely complete patient assessments, to **conduct joint visits** to complete HOPE assessments with their hospice patients who consent to take part in the beta test. Include admission nurses, and any office-based licensed registered nurses, social workers and chaplains who serve as managers/ coordinators for clinical teams, education, and quality.

- Include office-based staff who can support the team by identifying eligible patients, contacting patients and families to explain the project and obtain their consent to participate.

- Provide time in July (exact dates TBD) for designated hospice staff to participate in approximately **16 hours of required HOPE assessment and beta test procedures training, total.** Training is a combination of three virtual webinars and content that can be completed independently. Assigned staff will need access to a computer to complete the required training.

- Reserve time for staff to participate in **periodic telephone discussions** with the Abt testing team.

- Complete **at least 1 - 2 HOPE assessments per week** at admission, for follow up symptom reassessment, or at live discharge.

- Collect HOPE assessments electronically using a secure web-based REDCap data collection tool and your agency-owned **wi-fi enabled point of care device** such as a tablet, laptop, or smart phone. HOPE assessments may be completed using paper forms, and entered into the REDCap tool as soon as internet access is available.

What’s in it for Hospice Providers?

Hospice providers that participate in the HOPE beta test will have the opportunity to directly support efforts to transform the hospice care system to achieve CMS’s vision of promoting effective, efficient, high-quality care for hospice beneficiaries. Each hospice provider that completes data collection will receive a token of appreciation, and an official thank you letter and Certificate of Participation from CMS.
Thank you for considering this opportunity. If your hospice agency is selected to participate in the beta test, we greatly appreciate your support of this very important project. The HOPE development work is conducted under CMS contract number 75FCMC18D0014 and task order number 75FCMC19F0001.

How to Apply to Participate in Beta Testing:

Interested hospices should respond by contacting us directly at HOPETesting@abtassoc.com.

Questions? Email HOPETesting@abtassoc.com