



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

**Ref: S&C: 13-18-ESRD**

**DATE:** March 8, 2013

**TO:** State Survey Agency Directors

**FROM:** Director  
Survey and Certification Group

**SUBJECT:** Revised Roll-Out of the New End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Core Survey Process

**This Memo Updates and Supersedes SC13-01-ESRD**

**Memorandum Summary**

- **Roll Out of the ESRD Core Survey Training:** Roll-out of the new ESRD Core Survey process began on November 28, 2012.
- **FY 2013 Training:** Core training is mandatory for all ESRD surveyors. Training spots for FY 2013 are in high demand so prioritize attendance, and register surveyors in the Total Learning Management System (LMS) as soon as possible. As much as possible, we seek to train “teams” of State ESRD surveyors instead of waiting to train States as a whole.
- **Core ESRD Surveys versus traditional ESRD Surveys:** States may simultaneously have a team(s) of ESRD surveyors doing ESRD Core Surveys and a team(s) doing traditional ESRD surveys. CMS will continue to support both survey processes until all ESRD surveyors are trained in the ESRD Core Survey process.
- **Designating ESRD Core Surveys in Automated Survey Processing Environment (ASPEN):** ESRD surveyors must designate their ESRD Core surveys in ASPEN.
- **Surveyor Technical Assistant for Renal Disease (STAR) Updates:** CMS will continue to support STAR 3.4 for the ESRD surveyors who are doing the traditional ESRD surveys. We are currently revising STAR for use with the ESRD Core Survey process.
- **Implementation Support:** As a supplement to traditional support for survey decisions through the State Agencies and Regional Offices, a specialized mailbox will provide additional support: [ESRDCoreSurvey@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:ESRDCoreSurvey@cms.hhs.gov).

**Background:**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) officially rolled out the new ESRD Core Survey process on November 28, 2012, with training for ESRD surveyors in that new survey process. The new ESRD Core Survey process is a Survey and Certification Group (SCG) Quality Assurance Efficiency and Effectiveness (QAEE) Initiative. The goal of these initiatives is to increase the efficient use of survey resources while maintaining strong and monitored

effectiveness of the survey process. Current health care practice has demonstrated a strong correlation between efficiency and effectiveness, and we want to take advantage of that trend in the survey and certification program when possible.

The new ESRD Core Survey process is an outcomes-focused, risk-based approach to ESRD surveys, with the determinations of “risk” to ESRD patients based upon data (from ESRD surveys and ESRD literature) and professional judgment (from ESRD surveyors, ESRD patient leaders, technical experts, ESRD Network leaders, and professional and organizational leaders). The new ESRD Core Survey process begins with a focus on 1/3 of the ESRD survey tags as the most critical tags for ESRD safety and quality risks. The new ESRD Core Survey Process also:

- Promotes the use of ESRD data to focus on areas of potential risk within each ESRD facility;
- Incorporates a “culture of safety” into a robust Quality Assessment and Program Improvement review; and
- Utilizes infection control Checklists developed jointly by the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ), the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), and CMS.

#### **Pilot Testing of the New ESRD Core Survey Process:**

Eleven States (AZ, CA, DE, FL, MA, MI, NJ, NC, PA, TN, TX) pilot tested the new ESRD Core Survey process and new survey tools for three months between July and September 2012. Results of the ESRD Core pilot program indicated that the ESRD surveyors resonated with the new survey process and with the cultural change which accompanies the new ESRD Core Survey process. The time needed to complete the new survey process decreased from traditional surveys, while the ESRD Core surveys maintained their effectiveness. **Pilot surveyors trained in the ESRD Core Survey may continue to use the ESRD Core Survey process.**

#### **Training & Support for the New ESRD Core Survey Process:**

Training for the new ESRD Core Survey process is mandatory for all ESRD surveyors. CMS is offering two types of ESRD Core Survey training courses beginning in FY 2013 – a three-day ESRD Core Conversion Training course and a four-day ESRD Basic Technical Core Training course. We recognize that there will not be enough seats to accommodate all needs; States should therefore prioritize their 2013 enrollments, with a focus on training whole teams if possible.

Both courses train surveyors on how to use the new ESRD Core Survey process. *New* surveyors must attend the ESRD Basic Technical Core Survey Training. Only *experienced ESRD* surveyors who have attended an ESRD Basic Technical Surveyor Training Course since October 1, 2008, may attend the ESRD Core Conversion Training. Attendance at either of the ESRD Core Survey Courses is optional for ESRD Core Survey pilot surveyors. We are asking States to send ESRD survey teams as a group to training. CMS will continue to support both the ESRD Core Survey process and the ESRD traditional survey process until all ESRD surveyors are trained in the ESRD Core Survey process. States should follow the normal procedure for registering surveyors for ESRD Core Surveyor Training courses in Total LMS.

**Designating ESRD Core Surveys in ASPEN:**

Because training for the ESRD Core Survey process is being provided to State survey teams, **ESRD surveys conducted in any given State in FY2013 may be either Core or traditional.** To indicate that a particular survey is an ESRD Core Survey in ASPEN, please cite Tag “0000,” Initial Comments. At the beginning of your Initial Comments, add the following text, including the square brackets: [CORE].

**Conversions of the Surveyor Technical Assistant for Renal (STAR) for the ESRD Core Survey Process:**

STAR will be converted to the ESRD Core Survey process in two phases: STAR Lite (conversion and highlighting of ESRD Core Survey elements) and STAR Brite (complete conversion to the ESRD Core Survey process). The STAR Lite conversion is expected to be completed in the summer of 2013. There is no scheduled date for the release of STAR Brite. CMS will continue to support versions of STAR for both the ESRD Core Survey and the traditional ESRD Survey until all surveyors in the country have converted to the ESRD Core Survey. Training on STAR Lite will begin late in FY 2013; again seats are limited and State Agencies will should prioritize attendance. For those surveyors previously trained in STAR, a webinar will provide additional training for STAR Lite.

**Support for the Traditional ESRD Survey Process and ESRD Core Survey Process:**

ESRD surveyors will continue to work with their State Agencies and Regional Offices for support for their ESRD survey decisions. The ESRD Survey mailbox at [ESRDSurvey@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:ESRDSurvey@cms.hhs.gov) and the ESRD Core Survey mailbox at [ESRDCoreSurvey@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:ESRDCoreSurvey@cms.hhs.gov) continue to provide additional support to surveyors, States, and Regions. ESRD Core Survey information and tools will be published on the CMS Dialysis Survey & Certification Web site at [www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/GuidanceforLawsandRegulations/Dialysis.html](http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/GuidanceforLawsandRegulations/Dialysis.html). For STAR support, surveyors can contact the Alpine Help Desk at (800) 659-4626.

**Comments** or questions about this memorandum may be addressed to Judith Kari through the CMS Mailbox: [ESRDCoreSurvey@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:ESRDCoreSurvey@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 upon publication of this memorandum.

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management