

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
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Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

Ref: S&C-03-32

DATE: August 14, 2003

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: Pilot Program for Surveyor Technical Assistant for Renal Disease (STAR)

TO: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management (G-5)
State Survey Agency Directors

The purpose of this memorandum is to announce the states selected to participate in the pilot test of the STAR system. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a new tool for surveyors who survey End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) facilities. CMS, in conjunction with The Lewin Group and RDA Software, has developed the STAR system, which is an automated computer program for use on a Tablet Personal Computer (PC) that will guide surveyors through the ESRD survey and certification process. The STAR system includes regulatory text, survey guidance, and reference material related to the ESRD survey process. At the completion of a survey, the STAR automated system enables the user to electronically transmit the survey findings and necessary documentation directly to the existing Automated Survey Process Environment (ASPEN) system.

During the Annual Leadership Conference in April 2003, we requested volunteers to participate in pilot testing the STAR program and hardware. Many states volunteered to participate. Based on a set of criteria, including costs of performing ESRD surveys, the number of dialysis facilities, and number of ESRD surveys conducted annually, we selected five states. The five states are Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Texas. We want to thank all of the states that volunteered for this project.

The STAR system will soon be validated in the Washington, D.C. area. Following the initial testing, identified refinements will be made to the system. During FY 2004, we will begin the pilot test of STAR. The pilot test will be conducted over a six-month period, with each pilot state conducting at least 10 surveys using the STAR system. Participating states will receive two Tablet PCs containing the STAR software program. The Lewin Group and RDA Software will provide continuous technical assistance for STAR and the Tablet PC for the duration of the pilot test.

During and following the pilot testing, refinements will continue to be made to the system. After the completion of the pilot testing, we look forward to working with other states as we expand the number of states using STAR.

Please contact Michelle Dunkley (mdunkley@cms.hhs.gov) at 410 786-9361 or Judith Kari (jkari@cms.hhs.gov) at 410 786-6829 if you have any questions about the pilot test or the STAR system.

Effective Date: The pilot test will begin in FY 2004.

Training: The information contained in this announcement should be shared with all survey and certification staff, their managers and the state/RO training coordinator.

/s/
Steven A. Pelovitz

cc: Colleen Hirschorn, The Lewin Group
Deepti Malhotra, The Lewin Group
Traci Padgett, The Lewin Group