



NURSING HOME QUALITY PROJECT

**A Report to the Committees on Health and Welfare
for the
House and Senate**

Pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 7112 Sec. 3 as amended

Respectfully submitted,

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Department of Aging and Disabilities
Agency of Human Services
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Nursing Home Quality Project

Final Report

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produced by the
Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, Inc.

for the

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This document contains the Table of Contents and Executive Summary of the Nursing Home Quality Project Final Report.

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VPQHC is a non-profit peer review organization located in Montpelier, Vermont. We exist to improve the quality and efficiency of Vermont's health care system. We are governed by a board of directors that includes health care practitioners and representatives of hospitals, payers, consumers, employers and state agencies.

Executive Summary

The Vermont Department of Aging and Disabilities (the Department) contracted in August 1998 with the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care (VPQHC) to undertake a nursing home quality project. This is a final report on that project. The goal of the project was to provide guidance to the Department in their choice of quality and efficiency indicators to use for two purposes:

1. To assist consumers in judging the quality of Vermont nursing homes, and in choosing among facilities; and
2. To calculate quality incentive awards that encourage nursing homes to maintain high quality care.

VPQHC worked with a group of nursing home, state government and consumer representatives in carrying out this project. That group, called the Nursing Home Quality Work Group, was central to the development of the recommendations contained in this report. The group had four working meetings between August and December. In addition, members of the Work Group met three times to discuss specific issues, such as collection of resident satisfaction information. The Work Group reviewed a large volume of materials and used their expertise to guide our research and development of recommendations. VPQHC staff conducted research in several areas to better inform the Work Group. Research included:

- A review of available studies relating to nursing home quality data and indicators;
- Interviews with representatives of the Department and nursing homes and the state's long-term care ombudsman to learn about available data and indicators for measuring nursing home quality in Vermont; and
- Discussions with people undertaking similar efforts in other states and nationally, to ascertain the extent to which their work might be applicable to Vermont.

The results of this research are presented in the second section of this report. The third section of the report contains the specific recommendations of the Work Group.

As used in this report, "data" refers to records, or raw information, contained in a data system. "Indicators" are calculated using data and can be used as a measure of a condition or attribute. "Information" is either data or indicators made useful to an audience.

Summary of Major Findings and Recommendations

Findings

- While there are many potential audiences for nursing home quality information, consumers are the highest priority for the work group and individuals we interviewed.
- Research suggests that consumers (both nursing home residents and families) are most concerned with quality of life issues, followed by quality of care issues.
- Many data exist to measure nursing home quality in the state.
- The data that exist relate primarily to clinical status and cost, and to functional status as measured from a caregiver's point of view. Most available data do not relate to quality of life.
- Good indicators of quality of care have been developed to apply to available data, but not all have been tested widely. Good indicators of efficiency have not been developed.
- Some indicators may not be appropriate for cross-facility comparisons, as underlying differences in resident populations may account for differences in measurements.
- Some indicators are not appropriate for consumer comparisons, as they are designed to detect potential problems for further investigation by professionals, and not to measure quality as a basis for consumer choice.
- Data that are not suitable for consumer use can still be useful for nursing home quality improvement.
- Some models exist for both public release of quality information and quality incentive payments. However, efforts in both areas are relatively new.

Recommendations

- Data used for public information should be reliable, valid, timely, actionable and understandable. Such data should also respond to consumer concerns about quality of life.
- The Department should explore opportunities to expand the dimensions of quality captured by uniform data systems to provide a more comprehensive measure of nursing home quality.
- The Department should work with nursing homes, consumers and consumer representatives in the state to develop a statewide, standardized resident satisfaction survey as a complement to existing data sources and indicators.
- The Department should use comparative data from outside the state in conjunction with gathering Vermont data to strengthen our measurement activities.
- The Department should measure quality, for purposes of providing public information and for purposes of making incentive payments to nursing homes, using data from annual nursing home inspections.
- The Department should measure efficiency, for the purpose of making incentive payments to nursing homes, using data relating to adjusted cost per day.
- The Department should use a combination of a retrospective, formula-based reward system and a prospective grant-based award system for allocating incentive funds.
- The Department should continue to utilize detailed clinical data for purposes of focusing annual nursing home surveys and to pinpoint quality improvement needs.
- The Department should encourage and facilitate cross-facility quality improvement efforts where appropriate.
- The Department should build a strong foundation and clear direction for inevitable future changes and improvements in the quality and efficiency data and indicators available.