

What is an MDS Assessment? Why is it important?

Compliance to federal and state requirements is critical to the highly regulated long term care profession.

One of the key areas requiring compliance is the Minimum Data Set (MDS). The MDS is the foundation for Medicare RUGs (Resource Utilization Groups) reimbursement and Medicaid in case mix states. MDS assessments generate the nursing facility's Quality Indicators/Quality Measures and are a key focus during the survey process. Two of the founders of PointRight (originally known as LTCQ) were developers of the original MDS, and PointRight participated in developing MDS 2.0.

PointRight did a study of over 335,000 MDS assessments from 1,175 facilities between Q2 2006 and Q2 2007 and found 83% of assessment had at least one data integrity issue. The average number of issues found per assessment was 2.9.

A data integrity issue is defined as a clinical or logical discrepancy. An obvious example is the comatose patient who is coded as wandering. Errors are common because of the interrelationship of many of the MDS sections and because multiple people are involved in completing them. A data integrity issue is not necessarily a data integrity problem. Each facility interdisciplinary team decides if an issue identified is a data integrity problem.

MDS Assessments are done at least four times per year.

1. Admission
2. Quarterly (at minimum)
3. Annually
4. Some reimbursement plans require a 90 day Assessment Plan beginning upon admission and every
 - 14 Days
 - 30 Days
 - 60 Days
 - 90 Days
 - Quarterly thereafter (unless needed)

MDS Assessment reporting may be done daily, weekly, etc., depending upon the number of assessments performed at the facility.

The MDS Assessment impacts many areas:

1. Resident Care
 - Level of acuity
 - Accurate Care Plans
2. Reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid, some insurance plans
3. Surveys (Surveyors pull the results of the last six months of MDS submissions prior to conducting surveys at the facility to provide them with patient names, trends, issues, etc.)
4. Facility Quality Reports the public uses to "measure" which facilities are good (Nursing Home Compare). The data used comes directly from the MDS assessments.