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# NDLTCA Newsletter

## December 17, 2024

**All Members - *All Members***

**Assisted Living - *AL***

**Basic Care - *BC***

**Nursing Facilities - *NF***

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## Quality



## Parkside Lutheran Home is Improving Lives and Reducing Resident Falls

*All Members*

By LuWanna Lawrence

Providing quality care to residents is always top-of-mind for Tim Kennedy, administrator at Parkside Lutheran Home (tag them on Facebook) in Lisbon, N.D., and his team.

“Quality has always been a priority for us,” he said. “When you go out to a restaurant, you expect quality food. When you live in a nursing facility, you expect quality care that improves your overall health and well-being.”

That’s why Kennedy is excited about the North Dakota Health and Human Services’ Nursing Facility Incentive Program. It recognizes and rewards nursing facilities for providing quality care in four federally measured areas: reductions in urinary tract infections, pressure ulcers, use of antipsychotic drugs and hospitalizations.

“The program has elevated these quality measures to a high priority of focus for nursing facilities,” he said. “So far, we’ve found that when there are improvements in these areas, it naturally drives improvements in other areas.”

### **The waterfall effect**

That’s what happened at Parkside Lutheran Home. It started with a focused effort to reduce the use of antipsychotic medications among its residents. “We worked with our physicians to figure out what triggers could cause negative behaviors and then we helped our staff recognize those triggers and how to react,” Kennedy said.

They also added behavioral health training for staff and implemented simple interventions into their care model. “If we have a resident who gets irritable at bath time, we match them with a staff member who clicks with them to help reduce tension.”

Because of these changes, Parkside Lutheran Home reduced the use of antipsychotic medications by nearly two percent over the last year, which is a move in the right direction for a

small 40-bed nursing facility.

Because of this, Kennedy started to notice another positive change. “Our resident falls started to decrease,” he said. “There’s definitely a strong correlation between the reduction in antipsychotic medication use and falls. They go hand-in-hand.”

### **Investing in the future**

The Nursing Facility Incentive Program was designed in partnership with the North Dakota Long Term Care Association to improve resident outcomes and decrease costs by incentivizing quality care.

Parkside Lutheran Home received about \$58,000 from the program. They used the funds to provide wage increases and install a new energy-efficient air conditioning system.

“We have our wish list for future improvement, but for now, our focus remains on providing the best possible care to our residents,” Kennedy said.

To learn more about the program, visit [hhs.nd.gov/nursing-facility-incentive-program](https://hhs.nd.gov/nursing-facility-incentive-program).

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## **Regulatory**

### **AHCA Webinar Regarding Recent CMS Guidance Changes**

*NF*

On November 18, 2024, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released [Revised Long-Term Care \(LTC\) Surveyor Guidance: Significant revisions to enhance quality and oversight of the LTC Survey Process](#). The memo included significant changes to guidance in Appendix PP related to the updated regulatory areas. The changes will be effective, and

surveyors will begin surveying based on the revised guidance, on February 24, 2025.

The webinar, [Preparing for Upcoming CMS Guidance Changes: Key Updates and Action Items for Compliance](#), walks learners through each of the changes to guidance, the updates to the Critical Element Pathways (CEP), and provides some tips/action items to be compliant ahead of the effective date.

This on-demand webinar is available **free** to NDLTCA members and \$65 non-members.

Please send all questions to [regulatory@ahca.org](mailto:regulatory@ahca.org). Email [educate@ahca.org](mailto:educate@ahca.org) if you need assistance with registering.

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## **CMS Releases FY 2024 Improper Payment Data – What SNF Providers Need to Do<sub>NF</sub>**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently published the [Fiscal Year 2024 HHS Agency Financial Report](#), which highlights the Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS) paid claims error rates for Part A and Part B services for October 2023 through September 2024.

### **What Skilled Nursing Facilities Should Know**

During FY 2024, Medicare paid an estimated 92.34 percent of total Part A and Part B outlays for all providers properly, totaling \$382.02 billion. The estimated improper payment rate across all providers was 7.66 percent, or \$31.70 billion. In contrast, the estimated improper payment rate for SNF claims increased from 13.76 percent in FY 2023 to 17.2 percent in FY 2024.

Additionally, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently published the [2024](#)

[Medicare FFS Supplemental Improper Payment Data](#) report, which includes root causes of SNF Medicare Part A claim errors. It highlights that most errors are not related to medical necessity but are due to various correctable documentation and signature errors.

## **What SNF Providers Need to Do to Minimize Medicare Claim Payment Errors and Audit Risk**

AHCA/NCAL believes that there will be increased Medicare contractor claim review activity until the SNF paid claims error rate returns to lower levels. Errors can be corrected by improving documentation, MDS and claim coding, and triple-checking other similar pre-MDS submission and pre-claim submission compliance activities.

The Association offers resources to assist, including [ahcancaLED](#) and the [AHCA/NCAL Associate Business Member \(ABM\) Directory](#) for coding, documentation, billing, and compliance expert consultant partners of AHCA/NCAL.

CMS also offers resources, including:

- [The SNF Billing Reference Educational Tool](#),
- [SNF 3-Day Rule Billing](#), and
- [MDS RAI Manual](#).

Please contact AHCA/NCAL's [Dan Ciolek](#) with questions.

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## **Veterans**

## Senate Passes Bill With Provisions For Long-Term Care Options For Veterans

AL

[Seniors Housing Business](#) (12/13, Spiess) reported, "The U.S. Senate has passed a bipartisan bill that includes provisions for more long-term care options, including assisted living, for military veterans." In "addition to other proposals to enhance the delivery of services by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)," the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Health care and Benefits Act "features the Expanding Veteran's Options for Long Term Care Act, which includes the creation of a pilot program that will authorize the VA to provide assisted living residences for aging and disabled veterans." The "American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA) spearheaded lobbying efforts throughout the legislative process, with support from" groups including NCAL.

[McKnight's Senior Living](#) (12/16, Bowers) reports "senior living provider associations expressed cautious optimism Friday that" the bill "will find its way to President Biden's desk before the end of the year and become law." NCAL Executive Director LaShuan Bethea "told McKnight's Senior Living that the group was 'thrilled to see the significant progress made so far on this critical piece of legislation.'"

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## Advocacy

### Kelly Armstrong assumes office as North Dakota's 34th governor

*All Members*

BISMARCK — Friends and family of North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong and Lt. Gov. Michelle Strinden... [Read more...](#)

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## Health, Human Services changes likely, Armstrong says after first Cabinet meeting

*All Members*

By: [Michael Achterling](#) - December 16, 2024 5:52 pmNorth Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong signaled a possible shakeup at the Department of Health and Human Services after his first Cabinet meeting Monday.

[Read more...](#)

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## Education

### New AHCA/NCAL Educational Topics

*All Members*

AHCA/NCAL has released some new training and resources to help long term care professionals improve lives by delivering solutions for quality care! Some of the new educational topics are **“Preparing for upcoming CMS Guidance Changes”**, **“The Five-Star Quality Rating System”**, **“OSHA Respiratory Protection Plan”** and coming soon is **“Nursing Home Administration Beyond Essentials”**.



Visit [educate.ahcancal.org](https://educate.ahcancal.org) to learn more.

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## NDLTCA Education Page

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Visit our Education Page on our website to see more opportunities for you and your teams: <https://ndltca.org/education/>

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## Workforce

### North Dakota's Find the Good Life campaign aims for 'boomerangs' this holiday season

*All Members*

INFORUM - The advertising and workforce program is geared toward promoting North Dakota's main industries to address workforce shortages, but also showing former residents what they are missing. [Read more...](#)

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# Lawmakers Introduce Bill To Strengthen Pipeline Of Health Care Professionals In Rural, Underserved Areas

*All Members*

[McKnight's Senior Living](#) (12/13, Gaivin) reports, "US Reps. Carol Miller (R-WV) and Jill Tokuda (D-HI) have introduced the Strengthening Pathways to Health Professions Act, aimed at increasing and strengthening the pipeline of health care professionals in rural and underserved areas by enabling scholarship and grant recipients to keep more of their awards." The legislation "is endorsed by 50 national and local organizations, according to Tokuda," including AHCA/NCAL. AHCA/NCAL said it will "continue its advocacy around policies that help bolster the health care workforce that supports our nation's LTC residents."

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## Post a Job on Our Website

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[North Dakota Long Term Care Association | Career Opportunities \(ndltca.org\)](#)

If you would like to post a job opening for your facility, please contact Stacy Irey at 701.222.0660 or email [stacy@ndltca.org](mailto:stacy@ndltca.org)

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Contact us at 701-222-0660 or email Nikki at [nikki@ndltca.org](mailto:nikki@ndltca.org) or Peggy at [peggy@ndltca.org](mailto:peggy@ndltca.org).