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# Medicare Skilled Nursing Facility Appeals: **Explaining the NOMNC to Beneficiaries and Families**

This handout is designed to help staff explain the Notice of Medicare Non-Coverage (NOMNC) clearly and confidently to beneficiaries (patients) and families. It includes simple language explanations, communication tips, beneficiary appeal rights, and suggested responses to common questions that may come up during discharge discussions.

## Why These Conversations Matter

Beneficiaries and families may already feel overwhelmed, anxious, or emotional when discharge and Medicare coverage discussions happen. Clear communication helps reduce confusion, frustration, and fear.

## Start With Clear, Simple Language

Avoid medical or Medicare jargon whenever possible. Use simple, direct explanations.

**Examples:**

- Instead of “ambulating,” say “walking.”
- Rather than using the phrase “activities of daily living (ADLs),” explain the activities, such as bathing, dressing, going to the bathroom, or getting in and out of bed.
- Provide information step-by-step rather than at once.

**Walk through the following questions with beneficiaries and their families:**

- What does the NOMNC mean?
- Why are Medicare-covered skilled services ending?
- What are their options?
- What will happen next?

This handout is part of Acentra Health’s **Skilled Nursing Facility Appeals Education Toolkit**. Find related training videos and printable handouts at [www.acentraqio.com/providers/snf-appeals-toolkit](www.acentraqio.com/providers/snf-appeals-toolkit).

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Do not assume understanding by simply asking, “Do you understand?” Many people will nod or say yes because they feel overwhelmed or embarrassed. To ensure their understanding, a better option is to ask beneficiaries or caregivers to explain the plan back in their own words.

**Example:**

- “I want to make sure I explained this clearly. Can you tell me what you understand the next steps to be?”

# Explaining Why Coverage Is Ending

Focus on the beneficiary’s current skilled needs and what care will look like next, not simply on coverage itself.

**Avoid phrases like:** “The patient no longer meets criteria.”

**Explain:**

- The changes that have taken place.
- The discharge plan and why it is being recommended.
- The support or services that will continue after discharge.

**Beneficiaries may still need** home health visits**,** outpatient therapy**,** caregiver assistance**,** follow-up medical care, and medical equipment at home.

The goal is to help beneficiaries understand that care may be continuing differently, but will not suddenly stop altogether.

# Beneficiary Rights and Available Options

Beneficiaries have the right to request an appeal if they disagree with the decision to end Medicare-covered skilled services.

**Staff should explain:**

- How they can request an appeal.
- The timeline in which the appeal must be requested.
- Contact information and how to follow up about their appeal.

Include caregivers, family members, or representatives whenever appropriate, especially if the beneficiary has difficulty understanding or remembering information.

# Answers to Common Questions from Beneficiaries and Families

**“Why is this happening?”**

Explain the decision using clear, simple language focused on current skilled needs and discharge planning.

**“Does this mean Medicare is stopping all care?”**

Assure beneficiaries and their families that although Medicare-covered skilled services are ending, other services or support may continue.

**“What happens if we disagree?”**

Provide the information regarding the right to request an appeal and how to contact Acentra Health.

**“What happens after discharge?”**

Review the discharge plan, follow-up care, services, equipment, medications, and caregiver support arrangements.

# Reducing Confusion and Frustration

Discharge planning should begin early and continue throughout the beneficiary’s stay.

**Beneficiaries and families should not be hearing discharge information for the first time when the NOMNC is issued.**

By the time the NOMNC is issued, beneficiaries and families should already have a general understanding of:

- The discharge plan
- The beneficiary’s progress
- What support may still be needed
- What the next level of care may look like

Nothing about the discharge process should feel like important information is being introduced at the last minute.

# Communication Tips for Difficult Conversations

- Remain calm, patient, and professional during difficult conversations.
- Listen carefully to concerns and allow time for questions.
- Avoid rushing through explanations, especially when discussing Medicare coverage, appeals, or discharge plans.
- Use empathy without making promises or giving unrealistic reassurance.
- The goal is not to argue or convince someone to agree. Instead, the goal is to help beneficiaries and families understand what is happening, what options are available, and what the next steps will look like.

# Helping Families Feel Prepared

Families need time for education, teaching, questions, and preparation before discharge. Teaching and instructions often need to be reinforced over time rather than explained once right before discharge.

Check in with beneficiaries and caregivers to make sure they understand the discharge plan, know what services will continue after discharge, and feel comfortable managing care at home. Families should also know who to contact if questions come up after discharge.

# Provider Resources

- **Check appeal status online** on Acentra Health's website, 24/7: www.acentraqio.com/casestatus
- **News and updates regarding appeals** on Acentra Health's website: www.acentraqio.com/providers/appeals
- Contact information for Acentra Health: www.acentraqio.com/contact
- **Keep your facility's contact information updated with Acentra Health.** Providing the most current information means that you will receive *timely* communications from Acentra Health without unnecessary delays: https://acentraqio.com/providers/updatecontactinfo/
- **Access training and educational materials:** www.acentraqio.com/providers
- **Sign up for our newsletter:** www.acentraqio.com/newsletters
  You will receive newsletters and special bulletins with the latest information and updates from Acentra Health and organizations such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).