Ms. Dowd:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding federal requirements for hearing and vision assessments in nursing homes and the associated F-Tags. I am pleased to provide you with the following information. Federal surveyors are indeed required to check for hearing and vision assessments as part of their inspection process in nursing homes. These requirements are mandated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and are integral to ensuring comprehensive resident care.

The primary F-Tags related to hearing and vision assessments are:

* **F685- Vision and hearing-**This requirement ensures that residents receive proper treatment and assistive devices to maintain vision and hearing abilities, the facility must, if necessary, assist the resident in making appointments, and arranging for transportation to and from the office of a practitioner specializing in the treatment of vision or hearing impairment or the office of a professional specializing in the provision of vision or hearing assistive devices.
* **F636 - Comprehensive Resident Assessment** This F-Tag requires facilities to conduct a comprehensive assessment of each resident's functional capacity, including hearing and vision status. The assessment must be completed within 14 days of admission and periodically thereafter.
* **F637 - Comprehensive Assessment After Significant Change** This requires reassessment when a resident experiences a significant change in condition, which could include changes in hearing or vision.
* **F641 - Accuracy of Assessments** This F-Tag mandates that all assessments, including those for hearing and vision, must be accurate and reflect the resident's true condition.
* **F655 - Baseline Care Plan** This requires development of a baseline care plan that addresses immediate needs, which may include hearing and vision accommodations.
* **F656 - Comprehensive Care Plan** This F-Tag requires development of a comprehensive care plan that addresses all of a resident's needs, including those related to sensory impairments.
* **F657 - Care Plan Timing and Revision** This requires timely revision of care plans when changes in hearing or vision are identified.

The Minimum Data Set (MDS) 3.0, which is the standardized assessment tool used in nursing homes, includes specific sections for assessing hearing, speech, and vision in Section B:

* B0200: Hearing
* B0300: Hearing Aid
* B1000: Vision
* B1200: Corrective Lenses

During inspections, surveyors will verify that:

* Assessments are completed accurately and timely
* Identified sensory impairments are addressed in the care plan
* Appropriate interventions are implemented
* Assistive devices (hearing aids, glasses) are properly maintained and used

Facilities must maintain documentation of initial and periodic assessments of hearing and vision, changes in sensory status, interventions to address impairments, effectiveness of interventions, and the resident's response to care. For the most current and detailed information, we recommend consulting the State Operations Manual (SOM) Appendix PP - Guidance to Surveyors for Long Term Care Facilities, which contains the complete text of all F-Tags and interpretive guidance.

If you require any additional information or have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**Gerardo Ortiz, MHSM**

Division Director, CMS - Dallas

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