

Q&A: Hospice Survey Frequency
4/16/12

QUESTION:

According to a 2007 OIG report, **86% of hospices were surveyed within 6 years, as required, while 14 percent averaged 3 years past due.** Hospices that were 3 years past due for certification had not been surveyed for 9 years—3 years longer than the CMS standard at the time of our review. Two CMS regions accounted for 56% of the past-due hospice certifications: Region V (33%) and Region IX (23%). Only 24% of all certified Medicare hospices are located in these two regions. ***Do we know what these percentages are now?***

ANSWER:

I took a quick look at the Medicare 2010 survey numbers and found:

- **2970 / 3448 (86%) of hospices have been surveyed within the past 6 years.**
- **168 / 3448 (5%) of hospices have not been surveyed for 9 years or more.**
- South Dakota and Arizona have the most frequent surveys (mean= 1.4 and 1.7 years, respectively).
- California and Rhode Island have the least frequent surveys (mean= 7.0 and 9.2 years, respectively).

Of note:

1. Neither South Dakota nor Rhode Island have many hospices – so their percentages are easily skewed (either direction).
2. These numbers only reflect Medicare certification surveys (i.e., think “state surveyors”), but not accreditation surveys. So it is not surprising that a state like California, which has a high percentage of accredited hospices, has fewer state surveys. In fact, I’ve specifically looked at California hospices with the longest time since last survey (15-25 years), and every hospice I looked at was accredited. In some ways, this might be a “good indicator” as those particular hospices haven’t had a complaint survey (as most complaint surveys turn into full surveys) in as many years.

Please contact me with any questions. Thanks!

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