

Rural Healthcare *Quality* Network

RHQN Newsletter, July 2008
Randy Benson, Executive Director

National Rural Health FLEX Grant Conference

On July first and second I had the opportunity to attend the National Rural Health Office Flex Grant Conference in Kansas City. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service hosts the conference in order to share the accomplishments of various states using their Flex grant dollars and anticipated new requirements for critical access hospitals receiving Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) funding. Many of the break-out sessions focused on projects that various state agencies funded with Flex grant monies. I am happy to report that Washington State is far, far ahead of most states in the use of innovative programs for networking rural hospital quality and safety support. It made me very proud to be from Washington State.

Major initiatives coming from CMS in the next two years will drive processes that are currently in place in larger hospitals down to the critical access hospital level. In example, the “conditions on point of admission” documentation that prospective payment system hospitals are doing now will be required of CAH hospitals. CMS and most private payors will not reimburse for any condition that occurs as a result of the hospital stay. Governor Gregoire, the Washington State Hospital Association and the Washington State Medical Association have already made a pledge to the citizens of our state. That pledge promises citizens that they will not have to pay for services rendered as the result of a hospital acquired condition. The way to protect ourselves as healthcare facilities is to clearly document all those conditions that were present on admission. It is not impossible to do. This is a good time to start the process so we don’t get caught at the last minute.

Another initiative coming soon from CMS for CAH hospitals is a formalized process for community benefit tracking. Larger hospitals in Washington State have been doing this annually for approximately the last ten years for the Hospital Association. It is a powerful tool for demonstrating the value to your healthcare facility to the community and its economy. The Washington State Hospital Association can provide you with economic benefit information now. The additional benefit tracking will support your efforts at keeping the community healthy, not just economically sound.

July Members Conference Call Draws Large Crowd

The July RHQN members’ conference call set a record for participation. Twenty three hospitals and fifty seven participants joined me for a discussion of common Department of Health environment of care survey issues. We reviewed everything from infection control policies associated with keyboard skins on documentation lap tops to stained ceiling tiles. If you are one of the few who missed the call, an audio recording of it is available on our website at

www.rhqn.org/resources/presentations.htm. A variety of additional resources were added to the EOC tool kit on the website to provide support for the topics we covered.

One of the most interesting topics we discussed was documentation of staff competency, both at orientation and on an annual basis. Several facilities have been recently cited for failure to document a full and complete orientation of their new employees, especially travelers. So, in the EOC tool kit (www.rhqn.org/resources/howto/eoctoolkit.htm) there are numerous job code specific documents called “Specific Orientation Plans” (SOP’s). Included in the samples are orientation checklists for housekeepers, dietary workers, engineers, RNs, LPNs, NACs, social workers, and many others. In addition you will also find samples of annual skills review checklists that do an excellent job of documenting ongoing competency. If you have questions about their use or need additional SOPs, please let me know. I’m at randyb@wsha.org or 206 577-1821.

One of the great things to come out of the conference call is an opportunity for me to help you with environment of care issues in your facility. I have in the past week done mock EOC safety walk-a-rounds in three facilities, at their invitation. I love doing them and I believe that staffs in the facilities have gained valuable insights into what surveyors look for and the rationales for those observations and potential citations. This is a service that RHQN provides members at no charge. If you have an upcoming DOH survey and need an outside consultation or walk-a-round, let me know.

Upcoming Web base Seminar on Pay for Performance

Save the Date – CMS Value Based Purchasing Web Cast, Monday, July 28, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

The WSHA Patient Safety and Health Information Programs are hosting the first in a series of web conferences to support hospitals in planning for pay for performance. The goal is to minimize loss of payment as it becomes linked with reporting and quality of care in PPS hospitals. The *Connect the Dots* series is intended to bring together hospital professionals from quality and finance to discuss how their roles are inter-related to the overall success of the facility. As the pay for performance changes move forward, it is important for finance and quality to work closely together to maximize quality related payment. For questions regarding this web conference series, contact Carol Wagner, WSHA Vice President, Patient Safety at (206) 577-1831 or carolw@wsha.org.

Infection Control Consultation Available

I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that the RHQN has an infection control consultant available to you at not charge. Sandy Kangas, RN, Ph.D., is the infection control practitioner at Snoqualmie Valley Hospital. She has great expertise in infection control policy provision, practitioner competency enhancement and surveillance practice and associated performance improvement process. This is a huge asset for us because the state has recently cited several RHQN facilities for lack of current, appropriate infection control policies, inability to demonstrate infection control practitioner competence and failure to provide a performance improvement plan for outlier surveillance data. Feel free to contact her if you need assistance. Sandy can be reached at sandyk@wsha.org.