

Survey and Certification Operations to Ensure Patient Health and Safety

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Survey and Certification Group (SCG) maintains oversight for compliance with Medicare health safety standards for laboratories, acute and continuing care providers (including hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies (HHAs), end-stage renal disease (ESRD) facilities, hospices, and other facilities serving Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries). In the event of an emergency, SCG provides continuous guidance and communication to providers that service Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. SCG uses an “all hazards” approach for disruptive events to include but not limited to pandemic flu, hurricanes, tornados, fires, earthquakes, power outages, chemical spills, and nuclear or biological terrorist attacks.

The Social Security Act (the Act) mandates the establishment of minimum health and safety for Medicare and Medicaid providers and suppliers and the Public Health Services Act contains the minimum quality and safety standards for clinical laboratory. In the event of any hazardous event, SCG provides guidance in regards to various regulatory requirements which may be waived for the duration of a declared emergency, such as an 1135 waiver. The SCG provides guidance for CLIA certification of laboratories providing emergency services and the relocation of facilities to continue existing services. Additionally, SCG and Regional Office staff review individual waiver requests and maintain a system for rapid response in an event of an emergency.

During an emergency, SCG assists the CMS Regional Offices by providing support for modifying or suspending certain survey activities based on the scope of the emergency, State Survey Agency (SA) operational status and the impact of normal operations of providers.

The SCG Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding *Declared Public Health Emergencies- All Hazards Health Standards and Quality Issues* includes guidance for providers, Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) information, as well as provider operational guidance during an emergency incident.

For more information please refer to the following websites:

Survey & Certification-General Information

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/index.html>

Survey & Certification- Certification and Compliance

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/CertificationandComplianc/index.html>

Survey & Certification- Emergency Preparedness

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/index.html>

Survey & Certification- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

<http://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Provider-Survey-and-Certification-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>

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