

News Release

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New Mexico Joins Agencies Nationwide in Celebrating National Home Care Month

Albuquerque, NM — Home health agencies in New Mexico and across the country are celebrating National Home Care & Hospice Month in November. The 2007 Home Care Month theme is *Preserving Health Independence and Freedom* – a message that is especially pertinent this year.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Quality Insights of Pennsylvania, the Home Health Quality Improvement (HHQI) Organization Support Center, launched the HHQI National Campaign on January 11, 2007. Currently, more than 5,500 (approximately 65 percent) of the nation's home health agencies are participating in the HHQI National Campaign, an initiative that has united the home care community under a shared vision of reducing avoidable hospitalizations to improve patient quality of care.

In our state, the New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA), the state's Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), and the New Mexico Association for Home and Hospice Care (NMAHHC) have been working with 63 home health agencies to assist them in the HHQI Campaign. This represents 97 percent of New Mexico's Medicare-certified home health agencies.

"The great response to the HHQI Campaign shows the dedication of New Mexico's home health agencies in providing the right care at the right time for every patient," said Sheila Conneen, PhD, RN-C, NMMRA's home health quality improvement manager. "NMMRA is confident that the work

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being done by these agencies will contribute to a reduction of avoidable hospitalizations which will improve quality outcomes and patient and family satisfaction.”

Home health agencies that are part of the HHQI National Campaign are learning ways to improve the quality of care their staff members give to their patients. This improvement in care will help prevent patients from having to go to the hospital, thus *preserving health independence and freedom*. To assist New Mexico’s home health agencies reach their goal of improved patient care, NMMRA provides tools, guidelines, and evidenced-based resources, to help agencies’ patients stay healthy and out of the hospital. For more information about the campaign, please visit the official campaign Web site at www.homehealthquality.org.

National home care month is celebrated each year by groups such as NMAHHC and the National Association of Home Care and Hospice (NAHC). “Home care professionals and volunteers, along with modern medicine and technology, make it possible for sick citizens to be cared for in their homes where they can be surrounded by loved ones and precious mementoes as they live their best quality of life,” said Val J. Halamandaris, president of NAHC.

NMMRA is a not-for-profit, physician-sponsored organization that is New Mexico’s federally contracted Medicare Quality Improvement Organization and External Quality Review Organization for Medicaid. The organization works with health care providers, consumer and health care organizations, and state and federal agencies to improve the quality of health care in New Mexico.