

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Public Health and Health Planning Council, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Health, by section 2803(2) of the Public Health Law, a new section 415.32 is added to Part 415 of Title 10 (Health) of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, to be effective upon publication of a Notice of Adoption in the New York State Register:

415.32 Weekly bed census data survey.

(a) Definitions. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) “Communications Directory” (Directory) shall mean a listing of all organizations with access to the HCS, ordered by type, and including the identity of and contact information for individuals at each organization who: (i) perform specific job functions identified by the Department; and/or (ii) have access to perform certain data exchange functions on the HCS.

(2) “HCS Coordinator” shall mean the individual designated by each organization with access to the HCS to be responsible for authorizing and managing accounts and maintaining other key information about the organization’s HCS users.

(3) “Health Commerce System” (HCS) shall mean the Department’s secure Internet portal used for communications and information exchange with organizations including nursing homes and other health care providers or any successor system used for such information exchange as required by the Department.

(4) “Health Electronic Reporting Data System” (HERDS) shall mean the data reporting application on the HCS that houses the Survey or any successor system used for such

reporting as required by the Department.

(5) “Nursing Home Data Reporter” shall mean the name of the role in the Directory that provides access to an individual designated by a nursing home to use HERDS.

(6) “Nursing Home Weekly Bed Census Survey” (Survey) shall mean an electronic survey used by each nursing home to report its bed census to the Department using HERDS.

(7) “Role” shall mean the term used to indicate in the Directory the specific job functions and HCS data exchange functions assigned to individuals by each organization.

(b) Submission of Surveys.

(1) Each nursing home shall complete the Survey on HERDS on a weekly basis by indicating, for each category of bed, the total number of certified or approved beds and the number of those beds that are available. The Survey shall be submitted on a weekly basis by individuals at the nursing home who are assigned to the Nursing Home Data Reporter role within the Directory.

(2) Nursing homes shall report bed census data reflecting the weekly census taken every Wednesday at 12:00 a.m. The nursing home’s designated Nursing Home Data Reporter shall enter and transmit the survey census data to the Department between Wednesday at 12:01 a.m. and the following Tuesday at 11:59 p.m. Instructions for the Survey will be available on the HCS.

(c) Designation of Nursing Home Data Reporters. Nursing homes shall, through their HCS Coordinators, designate a sufficient number of Nursing Home Data Reporters to ensure that the Survey is submitted to the Department in a timely manner.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

Statutory Authority:

Public Health Law (PHL) section 2803(2)(a)(v) provides that the Public Health and Health Planning Council shall adopt rules and regulations, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Health, governing the standards and procedures followed by nursing homes which, at a minimum, must meet federal standards.

Legislative Objectives:

The legislative objective of PHL Article 28, as set forth in PHL section 2800, includes the protection of the health of the residents of New York State through the efficient provision and proper utilization of health services of the highest quality at a reasonable cost. This proposal, which requires nursing homes to submit weekly bed census data to the Department of Health (Department) through the Department's Health Commerce System, is consistent with that objective. Having current and accurate nursing home bed occupancy data is important in the event of natural disasters and to alert the Department to significant changes in nursing home occupancy, improving the Department's ability to take appropriate action. While facilities have already been advised administratively that they must submit this data, including the requirement in regulation will improve compliance.

Current Requirements:

The Health Commerce System (HCS), previously known as the Health Provider Network (HPN), is a highly secure, Internet-based, electronic portal for communications and critical data sharing with organizations including nursing homes and other health care providers. Section 400.10 of Title 10 (Health) of the New York Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) requires providers, including nursing homes, to maintain and keep updated an active HPN account.

DAL #09-02, effective April 8, 2009, was issued by the Department to require nursing homes to report weekly bed census data electronically to the Department through the HPN. The DAL provided for such data to be reported each week between Wednesday 8:00 a.m. and Friday 5:00 p.m. In 2013, via a notice sent through the HCS, the Department informed nursing homes that such data should be reported between Wednesday 12:01 a.m. and the following Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.

Needs and Benefits:

It is critical that the Department have accurate nursing home census data including occupancy and availability data by bed type. Natural events such as hurricanes and floods and other emergency events such as extended power outages could cause situations in which some nursing homes may have to transfer their residents to other facilities to ensure their safety. In those situations, the Department must be able to quickly assess the number and location of nursing home residents across the affected area, as well as the number of available beds. Furthermore, the ability to monitor a facility's current occupancy data

improves the Department's ability to identify a declining census and proactively take appropriate action.

Despite the current requirement for bed census data reporting, communicated via a DAL and a subsequent HCS notice, the Department often finds itself in the position of having to call some nursing homes repeatedly to obtain this information. This proposed regulation will add a new section 415.32 to Title 10 of the NYCRR to require that nursing homes submit bed census data on a weekly basis by electronically filing the Nursing Home Weekly Bed Census Survey (Survey). This will promote compliance and ensure that the Department has access to essential, current occupancy data as necessary to protect residents.

Accordingly, the proposed regulation provides that the Survey must be submitted via the HCS Health Electronic Response Data System (HERDS) application by a facility staff person assigned a Nursing Home Data Reporter role within the HCS Communications Directory. Nursing homes shall report bed census data reflecting the weekly census taken every Wednesday at 12:00 a.m. The facility's designated Nursing Home Data Reporter shall enter and transmit the survey census data to the Department between Wednesday at 12:01 a.m. and the following Tuesday at 11:59 p.m. Instructions for the Survey will be available on the HCS. The proposal further requires nursing homes, through their HCS Coordinators, to designate enough Nursing Home Data Reporters to ensure that the facility can submit surveys to the Department as required.

COSTS:

Costs to Private Regulated Parties:

New York State health care facilities are already required by section 400.10 of the NYCRR to have an HCS account to exchange electronic information with the Department. Moreover, nursing homes are already expected to send bed census information to the Department as communicated in the DAL. Therefore, nursing homes should not incur any additional costs related to the electronic submission of bed census information to comply with the proposed regulation.

Costs to Local Government:

This proposal will not impact local governments unless they operate a nursing home, in which case they will be impacted to the same extent as other nursing homes. As previously noted, nursing homes are not expected to incur any additional costs related to the electronic submission of bed census information.

Costs to the Department of Health:

The Department is not expected to incur any additional administrative costs as a result of the proposed regulation. The statewide HCS infrastructure and the mechanisms for nursing home bed census data collection are already in place.

Costs to Other State Agencies:

The proposed regulatory changes will not result in any additional costs to other State agencies.

Local Government Mandates:

This proposed regulation does not impose any new mandates on local governments.

Paperwork:

Nursing homes are already expected to submit bed census information via the HCS. Accordingly, the proposal should not increase paperwork.

Duplication:

This proposed regulation reiterates and strengthens the existing requirement, set forth in the DAL, that nursing homes report census data on a weekly basis to the Department. Moreover, while federal regulations require submission of bed census data to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on a quarterly basis, this regulation will ensure that the Department receive this information directly and more frequently.

Alternatives:

There are no other alternatives for the Department to reliably secure current bed census data from nursing homes.

Federal Standards:

Federal regulations require nursing homes to submit quarterly census data to CMS.

Compliance Schedule:

These regulations will be effective upon publication of a Notice of Adoption in the New York State Register. The statewide HCS infrastructure and the mechanisms for bed census reporting for nursing homes are already in place. Consequently, regulated parties should be able to comply with the proposed regulation as of its effective date.

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**STATEMENT IN LIEU OF
REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY ANALYSIS
FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

No regulatory flexibility analysis is required pursuant to section 202-(b)(3)(a) of the State Administrative Procedure Act. The proposed rule will not have a substantial adverse impact on small businesses or local governments. Nursing homes that constitute small businesses and local health departments that operate nursing homes, like all other nursing homes, are already required to have an HCS account to exchange electronic information with the Department and report bed census data.

**STATEMENT IN LIEU OF
RURAL AREA FLEXIBILITY ANALYSIS**

No rural area flexibility analysis is required pursuant to section 202-bb(4)(a) of the State Administrative Procedure Act. The proposed rule will not have an impact on nursing homes located in rural areas any differently than in any other areas. Such nursing homes are already required to have an HCS account to exchange electronic information with the Department and report bed census data.

STATEMENT IN LIEU OF JOB IMPACT STATEMENT

No job impact statement is required pursuant to section 201-a(2)(a) of the State Administrative Procedure Act. No adverse impact on jobs and employment opportunities is expected as a result of this proposed regulation.

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC COMMENT

The New York State Department of Health (Department) received one set of comments from an advocacy organization in response to the proposed amendments to Parts 415 of Title 10 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York. Those comments are summarized below along with the Department's responses.

Comment: The commenter asked for clarification of the "Legislative Objectives" of Article 28 of the Public Health Law (PHL), outlined in the Proposed Rulemaking, including what is meant by an "appropriate action" in response to a natural disaster or significant change to nursing home occupancy. The commenter also questioned where "such action" is authorized in law or the regulations of the Department.

Response: PHL § 2800 confers upon the Department "the central, comprehensive responsibility for the development and administration of the state's policy with respect to hospital and related services," with the goal of protecting and promoting the health of the residents of New York State. Given the scope of this responsibility, what constitutes "appropriate action" will depend on specific circumstances of the emergency, whether that be a natural disaster, an emergency at a particular facility, or violations of PHL or regulations occurring at a particular facility. No changes were made to the regulation as a result of this comment.

Comment: The commenter suggested that facility compliance could be improved if the Department would send the weekly reminder email to nursing homes on Wednesday of

each week rather than on Tuesday. The commenter believes these reminders could be more effective if they are sent at a point in time when the facilities can immediately act on the reminder and enter the data into the Health Commerce System (HCS). The commenter further suggested that the Department ensure that reporting requirements are explicit with regard to specialty bed categories and whether they are properly included in a facility's reported total capacity and census data.

Response: The Department agrees with the comments and will send the weekly reminder email to nursing homes on Wednesday of each week. The Department intends to clarify reporting of current occupancy data including specialty bed categories and total capacity, in a Dear Administrator Letter. Further clarification will be available on the HCS Health Electronic Response Data System (HERDS). No changes were made to the regulation as a result of this comment.

Comment: The commenter asked whether non-compliance with this proposed regulation could result in a financial penalty to a nursing home. The commenter suggested that possible financial penalties should be clearly disclosed in the Costs to Private Regulated Parties and Costs to Local Government section.

Response: The "Cost to Private Regulated Parties" and "Costs to Local Government" sections of the Regulatory Impact Statement for the proposed regulation are intended to detail the monetary cost of compliance. Financial penalties associated with non-compliance with regulations are established in PHL §§ 12 and 12-b. No changes were made to the regulation as a result of this comment.