

2.4 Responsibilities of Nursing Homes for Reproducing and Maintaining Assessments

The Federal regulatory requirement at 42 CFR 483.20(d) requires nursing homes to maintain all resident assessments completed within the previous 15 months in the resident's active clinical record. This requirement applies to all MDS assessment types regardless of the form of storage (i.e., electronic or hard copy).

- The 15-month period for maintaining assessment data may not restart with each readmission to the facility
 - When a resident is **discharged return anticipated** and the resident **returns to the facility within 30 days**, the facility must copy the previous RAI and transfer that copy to the new record. The 15-month requirement for maintenance of the RAI data must be adhered to.
 - When a resident is **discharged return anticipated and does not return within 30 days** or **discharged return not anticipated**, facilities may develop their own specific policies regarding how to handle return situations, whether or not to copy the previous RAI to the new record.
 - In cases where the resident returns to the facility after a long break in care (i.e., 15 months or longer), staff may want to review the older record and familiarize themselves with the resident history and care needs. However, the decision on retaining the prior stay record in the active clinical record is a matter of facility policy and is not a CMS requirement.
- After the 15-month period, RAI information may be thinned from the active clinical record and stored in the medical records department, provided that it is easily retrievable if requested by clinical staff, State Agency surveyors, CMS, or others as authorized by law. The **exception** is that demographic information (items A0500-A1600) from the most recent Admission assessment must be maintained in the active clinical record until the resident is discharged return not anticipated or is discharged return anticipated but does not return within 30 days.
- Nursing homes may use electronic signatures for clinical record documentation, including the MDS, when permitted to do so by State and local law and when authorized by the facility's policy. Use of electronic signatures for the MDS does not require that the entire clinical record be maintained electronically. Facilities must have written policies in place to ensure proper security measures are in place to protect the use of an electronic signature by anyone other than the person to whom the electronic signature belongs.
- Nursing homes also have the option for a resident's clinical record to be maintained electronically rather than in hard copy. This also applies to portions of the clinical record such as the MDS. Maintenance of the MDS electronically does not require that the entire clinical record also be maintained electronically, nor does it require the use of electronic signatures.
- In cases where the MDS is maintained electronically without the use of electronic signatures, nursing homes must maintain, at a minimum, hard copies of signed and dated CAA(s) completion (items V0200B-C), correction completion (items X1100A-E), and assessment completion (items Z0400-Z0500) data that is resident-identifiable in the resident's active clinical record.

- Nursing homes must ensure that proper security measures are implemented via facility policy to ensure the privacy and integrity of the record.
- Nursing homes must also ensure that clinical records, regardless of form, are maintained in a centralized location as deemed by facility policy and procedure (e.g., a facility with five units may maintain all records in one location or by unit or a facility may maintain the MDS assessments and care plans in a separate binder). Nursing homes must also ensure that clinical records, regardless of form, are easily and readily accessible to staff (including consultants), State agencies (including surveyors), CMS, and others who are authorized by law and need to review the information in order to provide care to the resident. Resident specific information must also be available to the individual resident.
- Nursing homes that are not capable of maintenance of the MDS electronically must adhere to the current requirement that either a handwritten **or** a computer-generated copy be maintained in the active clinical record for 15 months following the final completion date for all assessments and correction requests. This includes all MDS records, including the CAA Summary, Quarterly assessment records, Identification Information, Entry and Death in Facility tracking records and MDS Correction Requests (including signed attestation).
- All State licensure and State practice regulations continue to apply to Medicare and/or Medicaid certified facilities. Where State law is more restrictive than Federal requirements, the provider needs to apply the State law standard.

In the future, facilities may be required to conform to a CMS electronic signature standard should CMS adopt one.