2.2   CMS Designation of the RAI for Nursing Homes

Federal regulatory requirements at 42 CFR 483.20(b)(1) and 483.20(c) require facilities to use an RAI that has been specified by CMS. The Federal requirement also mandates facilities to encode and electronically transmit MDS 3.0 data. (Detailed submission requirements are located in Chapter 5.)

While states must use all Federally required MDS 3.0 items, they have some flexibility in adding optional Section S items.

- CMS' specified RAI covers the core items included on the instrument, the wording and sequencing of those items, and all definitions and instructions for the RAI.

- CMS' specified RAI does not include characteristics related to formatting (e.g., print type, color coding, or changes such as printing triggers on the assessment form).

- All comprehensive RAIs specified by CMS must include at least the CMS MDS Version 3.0 (with or without optional Section S) and use of the Care Area Assessment (CAA) process (including Care Area Triggers (CATs) and the CAA Summary (Section V).

- If allowed by the State, facilities may have some flexibility in form design (e.g., print type, color, shading, integrating triggers) or use a computer-generated printout of the RAI as long as the State can ensure that the facility's RAI in the resident's record accurately and completely represents the CMS-specified RAI in accordance with 42 CFR 483.20(b). This applies to either pre-printed forms or computer-generated printouts.

- Facility assessment systems must always be based on the MDS (i.e., both item terminology and definitions). However, facilities may insert additional items within automated assessment programs, but must be able to "extract" and print the MDS in a manner that replicates CMS' specified RAI (i.e., using the exact wording and sequencing of items as is found on the RAI specified by CMS).

Additional information about CMS specification of the RAI and variations in format can be found in Sections 4145.1–4145.7 of the CMS State Operations Manual (SOM) which can be found here: https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/som107c04.pdf. For more information about your State's assessment requirements, contact your State RAI Coordinator (see Appendix B).