



State of Louisiana
Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Management and Finance

July 1 2014

The Honorable John A. Alario, Jr., President
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

The Honorable Charles E. Kleckley, Speaker
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 94062, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9062

The Honorable Scott M. Simon, Chairman
Health and Welfare Committee
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 44486, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4486

The Honorable David Heitmeier, Chairman House
Senate Health and Welfare Committee
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9138

Re: Senate Bill 93 (Act 50) of the 2011 Regular Session

Dear President Alario, Speaker Kleckley, and Honorable Chairs:

Senate Bill 93 (Act 50) of the 2011 Regular Session requires the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) to submit annual reports to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare regarding the utilization of Medication Attendants Certified (MACs) to assist licensed nursing staff in the administration of certain medications in nursing facilities.

Although four Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) were initially trained and certified as MACs, two subsequently enrolled in a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program and were never employed as MACs, and two were employed for one year, but have since lost their MAC certification due to lack of employment opportunities. Currently, there are no MACs working in any of the state's licensed nursing homes, and there have been no facilities that have expressed an interest in employing MACs.

There have been inquiries from CNAs who were trained in medication administration in other states and wish to transfer their certification to Louisiana, but none have completed the process, possibly because there are no employment opportunities in Louisiana. Inquiries have been received from Louisiana CNAs who are searching for a path to career advancement through the MAC, but this has not led to any nursing homes expressing interest in the program.

Positive Effects of the MAC Program if Implemented

The MAC program was the result of a collaborative effort by representatives of DHH, the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners, the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy, the Louisiana State Nurses Association, the Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA), and

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the Louisiana Technical College System. These entities felt that the utilization of MACs to administer routine medications would allow licensed nurses more time to work directly with Residents. Programs similar to the MAC are utilized in other states, such as Texas, Kansas, Maryland, Ohio, Utah, Maryland, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri.

The positive effects of the MAC program if implemented are noted below:

- Relieving licensed nurses of routine medication duties, freeing them up to provide more one-on-one care and give more individualized attention to Residents;
- Enhancing the nurses' ability to respond more quickly to Resident's needs;
- Decreasing burn-out and overtime of licensed nurses, providing a cost savings to nursing homes;
- Provision of a career ladder for CNAs;
- MACs could be responsible for medication administration as well as assisting with general daily living care during times of disaster, such as evacuations and hurricanes;
- Decreasing medication errors due to fewer interruptions and distractions, which has been demonstrated by studies in Missouri and Utah; and
- Providing stability of staff administering medications resulting in less dependence by facilities on utilization of licensed nurses from staffing agencies to meet required nursing hours.

Concerns about the MAC Program

Although initially enthusiastic, nursing homes have not responded as anticipated.

Additional concerns regarding the MAC program:

- It is reasonable to expect that MACs are paid a higher hourly wage than CNAs because they shoulder the additional responsibility of medication administration. This would mean an increased cost for nursing homes who utilize MACs, although it is conceivable that this cost could be mitigated by a decrease in nurse overtime reimbursement.
- Nursing facilities have expressed concern about liability. Because MACs are not trained to the level of a licensed nurse, there has been hesitancy to incorporate the MAC into the complex task of medication administration in the interest of resident safety.
- Lack of public education regarding the function of the MAC
- Licensed nurses uncomfortable with supervising what they perceive as less qualified staff
- Licensed nurses fear that MACs threaten their job security

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Incentive Based Strategies for the MAC Program by DHH

• Revisions to the DHH rule on Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Programs, published in the June, 2012, edition of the Louisiana Register, addressed some of the nursing home's concerns:

- Allows nursing homes to count MACs in required nursing hours
- Makes the MAC program permanent and available to nursing homes on an on-going basis
- Allows training to occur in multiple approved training entities

• The Department has met with representatives from the Corporate and Continuing Education Department from Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), who have expressed an interest in teaching the MAC curriculum. These representatives have met with the director of the LNHA and have also spoken at an LNHA agency liaison committee meeting, discussing the implementation of MACs in nursing homes, and the role of BRCC in teaching the curriculum.

DHH will continue to utilize every opportunity to educate nursing homes, facility staff, Residents, their families and the general public about the utilization of the MAC. DHH maintains an ongoing relationship with the Louisiana Board for Nursing Facility Examiners (LaBENFA) and LNHA, participating regularly as a trainer in their conferences. The Department continues to maintain a dynamic and up-to-date website about MACs and is readily accessible by telephone or email to answer questions and concerns about the MAC program. Further, DHH is committed to assisting nursing homes with recognizing the benefits of the MAC, defining the role of the MAC and demonstrating the positive impact of the MAC to improve Resident care.

Thank you for allowing us to present information that shows the efforts DHH has made in managing the Medication Attendant Certified Program. Should you have any questions about this correspondence or the program, please contact Ms. Cecile Castello, RN, Director, Health Standards Section at (225) 342-4997.

Sincerely



W. Jeff Reynolds
Undersecretary

Cc: The Honorable Members of the House Health and Welfare Committee
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee
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