

# Enhancing Medication Safety in Nursing Homes

Megan Ward, MPH

Improvement Advisor

# Medication Safety in Nursing Homes: Ensuring the Well-being of Residents



Ensuring the well-being of residents' hinges on the safe and effective administration of medications.



This presentation is designed to provide comprehensive insights and actionable strategies for enhancing medication safety in nursing home settings.

# Understanding Medication Administration

# Understanding Medication Administration



Various types of medications commonly used in nursing homes.



Highlighting the importance of precise medication administration techniques.



Emphasizing the role of individualized care plans in medication management.

# Exploring the Various Types of Medications Commonly Used in Nursing Homes

- Residents often have complex medical needs that require a range of medications.
- It's essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the types of medications commonly used to ensure their safe and effective administration.

# These Medications Can Include

## **Maintenance Medications:**

These are medications taken regularly to manage chronic conditions.

## **Pain Management Medications:**

Residents experience pain, often related to chronic conditions or mobility issues. Proper pain management requires careful assessment, administration and monitoring to balance pain relief with potential side effects or risks of dependence.

## **Psychotropic Medications:**

These medications are used to manage mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety or dementia-related behaviors.

## **Antibiotics and Antifungals:**

Precise administration and adherence to prescribed regimens are essential to ensure the effectiveness of these medications and prevent antibiotic resistance.

## **Topical Medications:**

Correct application techniques are vital to avoid skin irritation, overdosing or underdosing.

## **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications:**

Residents may use OTC medications for minor issues like pain, allergies or digestive problems. Staff should be aware of these and document their use to prevent potential drug interactions or misuse.

# Highlighting the Importance of Precise Medication Administration Techniques

- Precise medication administration is fundamental in preventing errors and ensuring residents receive the intended therapeutic benefits of their medications.



# Key Considerations for Precise Administration Techniques

## **Dosage Accuracy:**

Administer the correct dosage as prescribed by the health care provider.

## **Timely Administration:**

Medications should be administered according to the prescribed schedule.

## **Route of Administration:**

Different medications may require specific routes of administration, such as oral, subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous.

## **Documentation:**

Accurate record-keeping of medication administration is essential.

## **Resident Education:**

Residents should be informed about their medications, including why they are taking them and any potential side effects.

# Emphasizing the Role of Individualized Care Plans in Medication Management

- Individualized care plans play a pivotal role in ensuring that residents' medication needs are met appropriately.
- These plans should be tailored to each resident's unique health profile.

# Care Plan Components

## Medical History and Diagnosis:

Care plans should reflect each resident's medical history, diagnoses and any known allergies or sensitivities to medications.

## Medication Regimens:

Clearly outline the medications prescribed for each resident, including dosages, administration schedules and any specific instructions, such as taking with food.

## Monitoring and Evaluation:

Specify how the resident's response to medication will be monitored, including regular assessments of effectiveness and any potential side effects.

## Special Considerations:

Address any special considerations, such as medication interactions or contraindications, and provide guidance on how to handle them.

## Communication Protocols:

Establish clear communication channels among staff, residents, families and health care providers to promptly address any medication-related concerns or changes in the resident's condition.

## Regular Review:

Care plans should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the resident's health status, medication needs or goals of care.

- By emphasizing the importance of individualized care plans, you can ensure that medications are administered in a way that aligns with each resident's specific health needs, minimizing the risk of medication errors and enhancing overall well-being.

# Identifying and Preventing Medication Errors

# Defining Medication Errors and Their Potential Consequences

A medication error occurs when there is any preventable event that leads to the inappropriate use of medication or harm to a patient.

- This can include administration of the wrong medication, incorrect dosage, administration via the wrong route or failure to administer medication as prescribed.

## Potential Consequences:

- Medication errors can have severe consequences including:
  - **Health Deterioration:** Incorrect medications or dosages can worsen a resident's condition, leading to health complications or hospitalization.
  - **Adverse Effects:** Residents may experience adverse effects, such as allergic reactions or side effects, due to medication errors.
  - **Psychological Impact:** Residents and their families may suffer emotional distress and loss of trust in the health care system.

# Identifying the Common Causes of Medication Errors

---

**Lack of Communication:** Inadequate communication between health care providers, staff and residents/families can lead to misunderstandings and errors in medication administration.

---

**Staff Fatigue and Overwork:** Overworked or fatigued health care providers are more prone to errors.

---

**Similar Medication Names/Look-Alike Packaging:** Medications with similar names or packaging can be easily confused, leading to administration errors.

---

**Inadequate Training:** Staff who are not adequately trained in medication administration techniques or who lack knowledge of medications may make errors.

---

**Distractions and Interruptions:** Busy environments with frequent interruptions can increase the likelihood of errors.

---

# Introducing Practical Strategies to Prevent Medication Errors

## **Improved Communication:**

Encourage open and clear communication among staff, residents, families and health care providers

## **Medication Reconciliation:**

Regularly review residents' medication regimens and update them as needed.

## **Double-Checking Procedures:**

Implement protocols that require two qualified staff members to independently verify medication orders before administration, especially for high-risk medications.

## **Education and Training:**

Continuously train and educate staff on medication administration best practices, including identifying high-alert medications and potential side effects.

## **Reporting and Analysis:**

Establish a system for reporting and analyzing medication errors and near misses.

## **Medication Safety Culture:**

Foster a culture of safety in which staff feel comfortable reporting errors and near misses without fear of blame or reprisal. Encourage a commitment to learning and improvement.

## **Regular Audits and Quality Assurance:**

Conduct regular audits of medication administration practices to identify areas for improvement and ensure compliance with safety protocols.



- Preventing medication errors is a shared responsibility that involves the entire team, from prescribing physicians to nursing staff and pharmacists.
- By defining medication errors, understanding their consequences, identifying common causes and implementing practical prevention strategies, facilities can significantly reduce the risk of medication errors and enhance resident safety and well-being.

# Educating Residents and Their Families

# Encouraging Resident Involvement in Medication Management

- **Patient-Centered Care:** The shift towards patient-centered care is crucial. Encouraging residents to actively participate in their medication management promotes a sense of autonomy and empowerment.
- **Understanding Medications:** Residents should have access to information about their medications, including their names, purposes, dosages and potential side effects. This information enables residents to make informed decisions about their health care.
- **Medication Self-Administration:** If appropriate and safe, residents can be trained to self-administer medications under supervision. This promotes a sense of independence and allows them to take an active role in their health.
- **Regular Medication Reviews:** Involve residents in discussions about their medication regimens during regular reviews. Ask for their input and address any concerns or questions they may have.

# Emphasizing Transparent Communication with Residents' Families

- **Family as Partners:** Recognize the role of residents' families as partners in the care process.
- **Family Education:** Provide families with detailed information about their loved one's medications, including the reasons for each medication, potential side effects to watch for and any special instructions.
- **Medication Changes:** Always inform families promptly about any changes in a resident's medication regimen.
- **Reporting and Feedback:** Encourage families to report any observed changes in the resident's condition or potential medication-related issues. Create a clear process for feedback and concerns.
- **Family Training:** Offer training sessions for families on medication administration, especially if residents are expected to take medications at home during temporary leaves or after discharge.

# Quality Assurance

# Quality Assurance Measures and the Importance of Continuous Improvement

- **Quality Assurance Programs:** These programs are systematic approaches to assess, monitor and improve the quality of care and services provided to residents.
- **Medication Safety Audits:** Audits may include assessments of medication administration, documentation and staff adherence to protocols.
- **Root Cause Analysis (RCAs):** RCAs help identify the underlying causes of errors, allowing nursing homes to implement corrective actions that address the root issues rather than just the symptoms.
- **Continuous Education and Training:** Medication safety practices evolve, and it's crucial for nursing home personnel to stay current with best practices and emerging trends.
- **Feedback Loops:** Encourage open and non-punitive reporting mechanisms to promote a culture of learning and improvement.
- **Performance Metrics:** These metrics may include medication error rates, resident satisfaction and adherence to protocols.
- **Benchmarking:** Facilities can learn from the experiences of other facilities and adapt successful strategies to improve their own medication safety measures.
- **Continuous Improvement Culture:** Encourage a culture of continuous improvement, where staff at all levels are actively engaged in identifying opportunities for enhancement and implementing changes.

Continuous improvement in medication safety practices not only ensures compliance with regulations but also enhances the overall well-being and safety of residents in these facilities.

# Q&A and Discussion

# Key Highlights

- **Understanding Medication Administration:** We've recognized the importance of understanding the various types of medications commonly used, emphasizing precise administration techniques and acknowledging the role of individualized care plans.
- **Identifying and Preventing Medication Errors:** We've delved into the definition of medication errors, their potential consequences and the common causes behind them. We've also introduced practical strategies to prevent these errors through improved communication and double-checking procedures.
- **Educating Residents and Their Families:** We've emphasized the value of resident involvement in medication management, transparent communication with families and the development of educational training programs to enhance awareness of medication safety.
- **Quality Assurance:** We've stressed the significance of adhering to regulatory standards, discussed quality assurance measures and highlighted the importance of continuous improvement in medication safety practices.

By applying the knowledge and strategies we've discussed today, we can collectively strive for a future where every resident receives safe and effective medication management.



# References

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2464957/>
- <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/perspective/medication-safety-nursing-homes-whats-wrong-and-how-fix-it>
- <https://www.nursinghomelawcenter.org/medication-errors-in-nursing-homes.html>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10967148/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12595401/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11887410/>



*This material was prepared by Comagine Health, a Medicare Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 12-SOW-T1-23-QIN-243*

# Center of Excellence

**Tara Bowsher, MPH**

Improvement Advisor/Behavioral Health Specialist



# Center of Excellence Overview

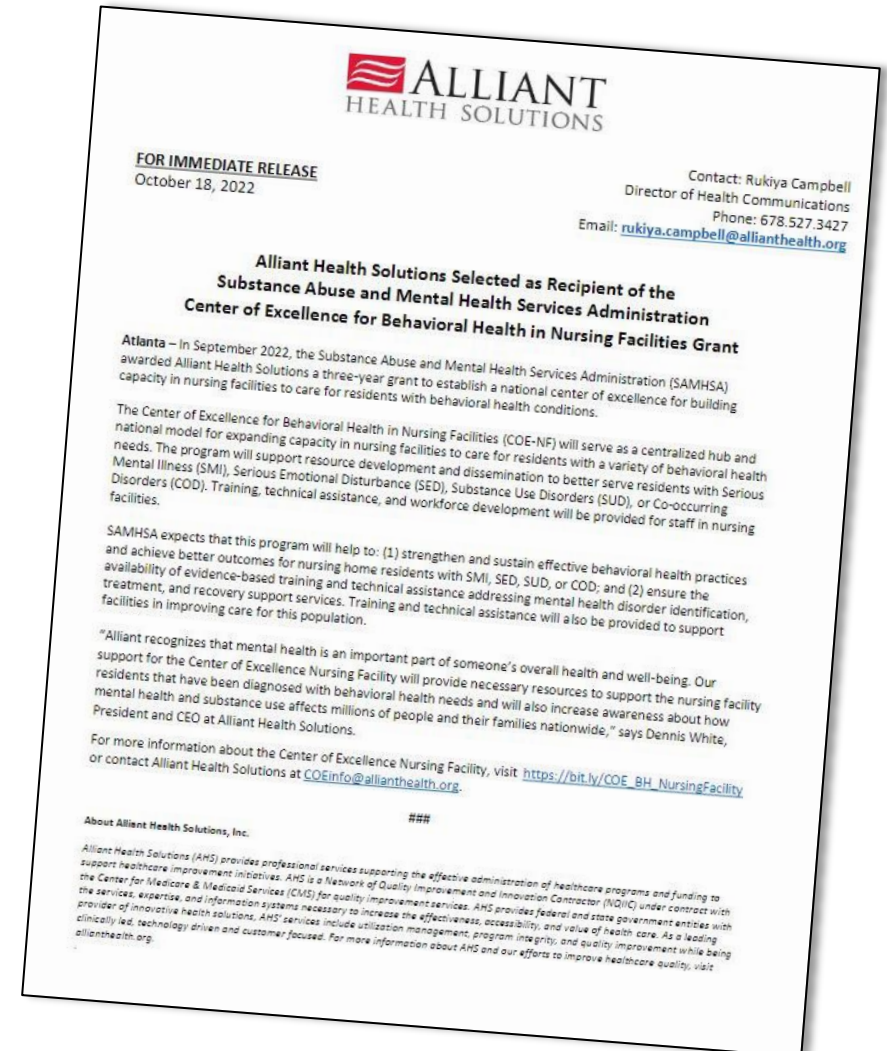
Date: 9/12/23



CENTER OF  
**EXCELLENCE**  
FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
IN NURSING FACILITIES

# Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health In Nursing Facilities

- Cooperative agreement between two federal agencies:
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Awarded to Alliant Health Solutions
- Three-year grant: Started September 30, 2022



# SAMHSA Center of Excellence Model

## **SAMHSA Centers of Excellence Model:**

Provide training and technical assistance on behavioral health needs of special populations.



## **Examples of other SAMSHA Centers of Excellence:**

- E4 Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Disparities in Aging
- African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence
- Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
- LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity Center of Excellence

# COE-NF Purpose

**Purpose:** The COE-NF serves as a centralized hub for expanding capacity in CMS-certified nursing facilities to care for residents with a variety of behavioral health conditions. Training, technical assistance and workforce development are provided to staff in nursing facilities.

## **Behavioral health areas of focus:**

- Serious Mental Illness (SMI)
- Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)
- Substance Use Disorders (SUD)
- Co-Occurring Disorders (COD)
- Updated CMS nursing facility guidance (behavioral health, resident rights, quality of care)

# COE-NF National Staffing Model

## Regional Behavioral Specialists Model

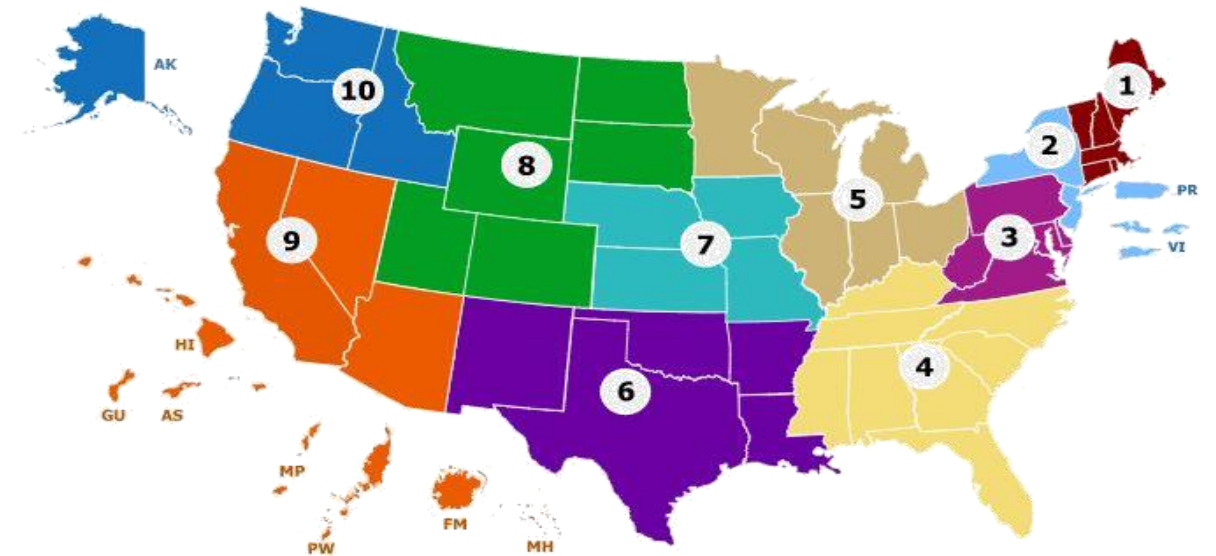
- Experienced behavioral health professionals
- 10 COE-NF Behavioral Specialists
  - Alliant regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
- Each specialist is dedicated to an HHS region
- They live and work in the region they serve

## Comagine Health

- Partner
- Cohort Learning
- Supporting regions 6, 8, 9, 10

## Additional Support

- Recovery specialist
- Training and education lead
- Subject matter experts on a variety of behavioral health topics





# COE-NF Services Audience

- COE-NF offers training and resources for all nursing facility staff
  - Administrators, directors of nursing, social workers, activities, nurses, nurse aides, rehabilitation, environmental services and dietary team members
- All staff benefit from knowledge and skills regarding resident's behavioral needs, and CMS guidance on behavioral health education.

# Services Available to Nursing Facilities

## Foundational Trainings

- Behavioral health trainings identified needs assessment (literature review/interviews)
- Frequently offered and available on a monthly rotation
- Multiple facilities participate in same training session
- Trainings are inclusive of, but not limited to:
  - **De-Escalation Strategies** (Certificate program)
  - **Mental Health First Aid** (Certificate program)
  - **Question, Persuade, Refer** (Certificate program)
  - **Mental Health 101**
  - **Substance Use 101**
  - **Trauma-Informed Care**



# Services Available to Nursing Facilities

## Customized Technical Assistance

- Facility level behavioral health individualized technical assistance
- Provided by behavioral specialists based out of the region they cover
- Customized training opportunities to match facility's needs

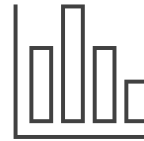


# Cohort Learning Initiative

- Join a group of facilities to learn together and from each other
- Monthly series of learning opportunities
- Each session has educational component and group sharing/learning component



# Cohort Learning Initiative



## 3 Evaluation Time Points

Assessment of current knowledge and state of their program will be evaluated prior to the first session, immediately after the last session, and 6 months following the series completion.

**40 Facilities Per Cohort**  
 There may be multiple staff within one facility participating.



# Topics



Session 1

Understanding & Implementing Behavioral Health in the Long-Term Setting

SEP



Session 2

Mental Health Basics

OCT



Session 3

Screening for Mental Health & Substance Use in the Skilled Setting

NOV



Session 4

Engaging with Residents: Effective Communication Skills

DEC



Session 5

Incorporating Behavioral Health & SUD into Individualized Assessment and Person-Centered Care

JAN



Session 6

Deescalating Behavior

FEB

Topics build on one another throughout the series



This series sets the foundation for the future series

# Online Resource Hub

- All resources on SMI/SED/SUD/COD topics with a specialized focus on nursing facility considerations
- On-demand learning modules – utilize when most convenient for staff
- Bite-sized learnings
- Fact sheets and educational flyers



# Eligibility

- COE-NF is funded to serve CMS Certified nursing facilities
- Facilities should be listed on the CMS Care Compare site as a **nursing facility** or **skilled nursing facility**
- Nursing facilities that are **not** CMS-certified assisted living facilities are **not** eligible for services
- Ineligible facilities can still access the COE-NF free online resource hub, however those facilities are not eligible for technical assistance or trainings.





# When to Request Help from the COE-NF

## Request assistance with:

- Gaps identified in staff knowledge or skills in meeting behavioral health needs of residents
- Difficulty meeting a particular resident's behavioral health needs
- Where to start and how to prioritize training and skills development for staff around behavioral health needs of residents

## Inquiries We Refer:

- Assistance in non-behavioral health areas
- Requests or concerns from residents or care partners
- Requests from providers that are not CMS certified nursing facilities
- Emergencies - call 911



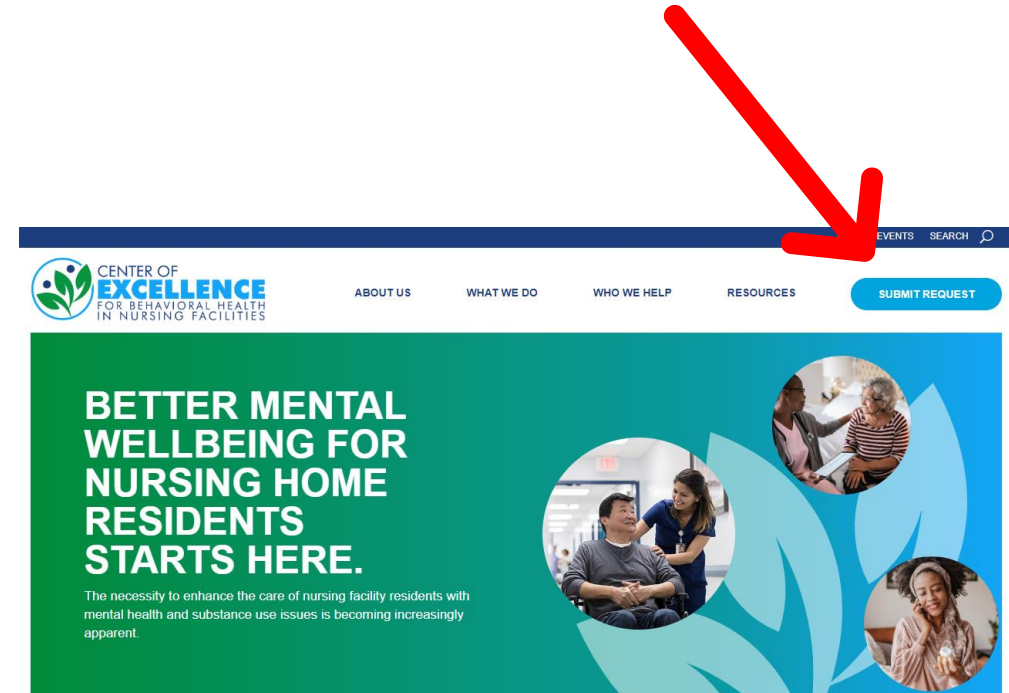
# How to Submit a Request

## Dedicated Website

- Online form where nursing facilities can submit consultation requests
- Include CCN number and full facility name
- Online requests are responded to within **48 hours**
- <https://nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org/request-assistance>

## National Call Center: (844) 314-1433

- Staffed by COE-NF behavioral specialists
- Assistance with completing the consultation request form
- Live Monday-Friday from 1-5 p.m. EST
- Messages will be responded to within **one (1) business day**



# Engagement Strategies

## Monthly Newsletter

- Shares behavioral health resources
- Provides nursing facility behavioral health regulatory updates
- Announces upcoming training opportunities

## Social Media Profiles

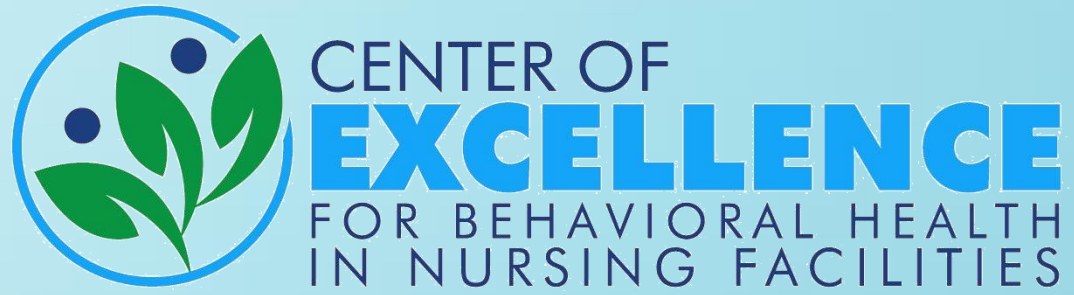
- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/nursinghomebh/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/nursinghomebh/)
- Twitter: [twitter.com/NursingHomeBH](https://twitter.com/NursingHomeBH)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NursingHomeBH](https://www.facebook.com/NursingHomeBH)
- YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCgnRi9EFB9rXApnIUwS09sw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgnRi9EFB9rXApnIUwS09sw)

## Text Messaging Platform

- Enables nursing facility staff to receive COE-NF updates on their smartphone



Scan QR code to sign up for the COE newsletter.



## Questions ?



# Presenter Contact Information

**Tara Bowsher, MPH**

Regional Behavioral Specialist, Region 9

[Tara.Bowsher@AlliantHealth.org](mailto:Tara.Bowsher@AlliantHealth.org)

# Connect with Us!



**Subscribe to receive text messages from COE-NF!**  
Scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/COETextList> to stay up-to-date on COE-NF services and news.

## **Contact us:**

For more information or to request assistance, we can be reached by phone at **1-844-314-1433** or by email at [coeinfo@allianthealth.org](mailto:coeinfo@allianthealth.org).

## **Visit the website:**

[nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org](http://nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org)

Thank You!

