Blackboard learn+

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Strengthens Training with Blackboard Learn™

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) mission is to ensure effective, up-to-date health care coverage and to promote quality care for beneficiaries. As part of that mission, CMS's Training for Survey and Certification Group faces the daunting task of training the 6,500 surveyors responsible for examining hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies and ambulatory centers for Medicare and Medicaid compliance. As one staffer put it, "The role of the CMS is to knock on the door, look under the rug and ensure providers are living up to the standards."

The surveyor team, which is spread over 12 time zones — from Maine to Florida and the Marianas Islands, a U.S. protectorate in the Pacific Ocean — is responsible for specialties as diverse as life safety (otherwise known as fire code regulations) and clinical protocol (adhering to Medicare/Medicaid standards, such as whether seniors in nursing homes are provided a sanitary and safe living environment). As if this isn't challenging enough, Medicare/Medicaid regulations change due to Congressional action. This can cause training material to become outdated from one session to the next for any one of the 65 classes CMS offers annually.

Blackboard Learn Meets the Challenge of a Complex Training Environment

Medicare and Medicaid compliance guidelines are not only comprehensive, but often extremely complicated. In addition, the fire marshals, nurses, nutritionists and social workers who make up CMS's surveyors travel up to 80% of the time on the job, creating obvious scheduling challenges. With these factors in mind, CMS has turned to Blackboard to make training more manageable.

QUICK FACTS:

Provide consistent, comprehensive instruction and training to thousands of facility inspectors across the country.

There were four main reasons why CMS selected the Blackboard Learn platform:

- **Ease of Access** – Even with their extensive travel schedules, class participants can connect with course material and fellow students from anywhere with an internet connection.

- **Consistency of Message** – Course materials can be updated from one central control point, assuring that the latest federal interpretive guidelines are accurately and consistently communicated to surveyors.

- **Capacity to Integrate Training Tools to a Single Portal** – All instructional resources can be combined at one "location."

- **Ability to Provide a Blended Learning Experience** – CMS places great emphasis on a combination of experiential practice, group collaboration, student preparation and instructor guidance and feedback, all of which Blackboard Learn can integrate seamlessly.

The Importance of Blended Learning Capabilities

CMS plans to use Blackboard Learn in a variety of individual (asynchronous) and group (synchronous) applications. For example, students might access written material and virtual tours of facilities on their own schedules, using the time to make notes of their questions and tour compliance findings. Later, the entire class will gather online with instructors to present and discuss their findings. There will be two distinct benefits resulting from this combination of training methods:

- **Greater efficiency in accommodating surveyors' and instructors' busy schedules.**

- **Practical experience working in an environment that requires team decisions.**

Blackboard Learn provides the collaborative tools and stored content to enable communication in a secure environment. This will enable CMS to reduce travel costs and improve surveyor and instructor productivity.

Plans for Systemwide Rollout

Beginning with several hundred the first year, current projections call for doubling the number of participants each year until 2010, when the entire surveyor population is expected to be receiving instruction through the Blackboard Learn system. This will include new surveyors as well as those receiving cross-training and advanced instruction.

CMS is responsible for 6,500 surveyors across 12 time zones, all of whom travel up to 80% of the time and must stay up-to-date on the latest changes to Medicare / Medicaid compliance regulations.

Blackboard Learn will enable CMS to reduce travel costs and improve surveyor and instructor productivity.

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