

Qualified Medication Aide

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Overview

Create a statutorily recognized position of Qualified Medication Aide in the nursing home setting to administer routine medications with the goal of enhancing the quality of care provided to residents by freeing up nurses to perform care that involves higher skill levels and creating a specialization and career advancement opportunity for certified nursing assistants.

Background

A Qualified Medication Aide (QMA) is an individual licensed as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) who has demonstrated competency through additional formal classroom and clinical training which allows the QMA to administer routine medications under the supervision of a nurse. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) authorizes the use of medication aides in the nursing home setting as a part of the nursing services job category. Currently, 36 states have enacted legislation to permit employment of medication aides to administer medications to residents in long-term care. Of the 8 states in CMS Region 4, only Florida and Mississippi do not currently authorize the medication aide position; the other 6 states (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) allow the position.

Florida

Florida currently authorizes persons other than nurses to administer medications in several settings. CNAs and home health aides may be delegated the task of medication administration to patients of home health agencies (ss. 400.464, 400.489, 464.0156, 464.2035, F.S.); CNAs may also administer medication to patients in a county detention facility (ss. 464.0156, 464.2035, F.S.). Patients with brain or spinal cord injuries in transitional living facilities and developmentally disabled clients living in residential facilities may be administered medications by unlicensed direct care staff (ss. 400.9977, 393.506, F.S.). In addition, unlicensed school personnel may administer certain medications and inject insulin to students in grades K-12 (ss. 1002.20, 1006.062, F.S.). Finally, registered pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy interns may administer vaccine injections (ss. 465.014, 465.189, F.S.). These individuals must complete training and demonstrate competency before administering any medication.

Effect of Authorizing Qualified Medication Aide

- Creates parity with other states by authorizing the use of a QMA in Florida nursing homes.
- Promotes better health outcomes for residents by concentrating efforts of nurses into areas that require a higher level of skill such as the use of nursing assessment, interpretation, and clinical judgment.
- Heightens job satisfaction of nurses by eliminating the strictures that only a nurse can administer routine medications and must “push pills on the med-cart all day”.
- Creates a pathway for CNAs to be promoted to a higher trained job level.
- Encourages the employment of additional CNAs and retention of existing CNA staff.