



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

July 23, 2012

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  
House 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  
Senate Health and Welfare Committee  
Louisiana State Senate  
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

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 to assist licensed nursing staff in the administration of certain medications in nursing facilities.

To date, only Gonzales Healthcare Center in Gonzales and Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Crowley have completed the Medication Attendants Certified (MAC) program application process. Four certified nursing assistants (CNAs) recommended by Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center have been trained and certified as MACs. This training took place at Acadian Technical College in Crowley. Two of the MACs were employed for one year at Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Two of the MACs subsequently enrolled at Acadian Technical College in the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program, and were never employed as MACs. Gonzales Healthcare Center never recommended any CNAs for training or employed any MACs. Currently, there are no MACs working in any of the state's licensed nursing facilities.

**Positive Effects of the MAC Program**

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, LNHA and 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 have been employed in other states, such as Texas, Kansas, Maryland, Ohio, Utah, Maryland, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri.

The positive effects of the MAC program are noted below:

- As stated above, students, faculty, and staff at Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and DHH felt that employing MACs would benefit nursing facilities by relieving licensed nurses of medication duties, thereby freeing them to spend more one-on-one time with residents and leading to improved quality of care for residents. Nurses would get to know residents and their families better, be able to respond more quickly to residents' needs, provide extra individualized attention that is essential to patient care, and help to decrease nursing staff "burn-out". It was also felt that relief of the task of routine medication administration by the licensed nurse would decrease overtime, thereby providing a cost savings to nursing homes.
- Faculty and students expressed excitement about the future potential for advancement as a MAC, providing CNAs a career ladder.
- The Acadian Technical College instructor indicated that MACs would be especially helpful in times of disaster, such as evacuations and hurricanes. During Hurricane Gustav, licensed nurses cared for Louisiana citizens in medical special needs shelters. Many of these citizens had multiple medical diagnoses, took multiple medications, and required direct intensive nursing care. MACs could be responsible for ensuring that citizens received their medications, thereby relieving licensed nurses of that duty and giving them more time to provide nursing care. This would potentially result in fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits. Additionally, MACs, who are also CNAs, could assist citizens with general daily living care, also relieving licensed nurses of these duties.
- A study done by the University of Missouri in collaboration with the University of Utah determined that increased interruptions and distractions of licensed nurses were associated with medication errors. The study provided initial evidence to suggest that Certified Medication Technicians or Aides (comparable to MACs) can be effectively used for routine medication administration by improving the safety of medication administration, because they were shown to have fewer interruptions and distractions and fewer medication errors.

### **Concerns about the MAC Program**

Despite nursing homes' initial indication that they were enthusiastic about use of the MAC, facilities have not responded as anticipated. Only one facility, Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, trained and employed MACs. At the present time, there are no MACs employed in the state, and the two remaining will lose their certification on August 1 due to lack of work history.

Additional concerns regarding the MAC program are noted below:

- The Administrator at Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center indicated that he employed MACs for the 400 hours required to maintain their two year certification, as specified in Senate Bill 93 (Act 50). Because MACs shoulder the additional responsibility of administering medications, it is reasonable to expect that they be paid a higher hourly wage than CNAs. The administrator stated that his facility could not afford the additional monies required to employ the MACs.
- The rule published in the Louisiana Register on July 20, 2008, entitled Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Programs, specifies the scope of practice for the MAC and limits the types and routes of administration of some medications. The Director of Nurses (DON) of Southwind Nursing and Rehabilitation Center indicated that because of these restrictions, MACs did not provide the level of relief anticipated to the licensed nursing staff. Many of the residents in this facility require medications such as narcotics and insulin, and MACs are not allowed to administer these types of medications. The scope of practice of MACs was thoughtfully determined, with input from the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners, the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy, as well as DHH. It was determined that the MAC scope of practice should be limited to protect resident safety. MACs are simply not trained to the level of a licensed nurse to administer more complex medications, such as narcotics, and injectable medications. At the present time, it is not deemed acceptable to expand the MAC scope of practice.
- The Southwind administrator and representatives from LNHA indicated that the inability to count MACs in required nursing hours was detrimental, and increased the cost of employing MACs.
- LNHA voiced concerns that MAC training was restricted to the Community and Technical College system, and Acadian was the only campus where the curriculum was offered.
- Faculty and students from Acadian indicated a lack of public education regarding the function of the MAC contributed to the lack of acceptance and success of MAC program.
- Licensed nursing staff indicated that they were uncomfortable with supervising what they perceived as less qualified staff.
- LPNs feared that allowing unlicensed personnel to assist with medication administration threatened their job security.

### **Incentive Based Strategies for the MAC Program by DHH**

To address some of the concerns outlined above, and in an effort to encourage more nursing facilities to utilize MACs, DHH's rule on Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Programs has been revised. These revisions will remove previous restrictions and was published in the June 2012 edition of the Louisiana Register. The revisions to the rule include:

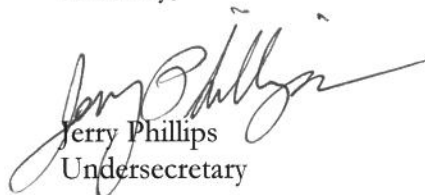
- Nursing facilities will be allowed to count MACs in required nursing hours.
- MAC training will be allowed to occur in multiple approved training entities as opposed to only one training entity.
- The MAC program has been changed from a pilot to a permanent program and will be available to nursing facilities on an on-going basis if they wish to apply.

DHH will utilize every opportunity to educate nursing facilities, facility staff, facility residents, their families, and the general public about the utilization of MACs. DHH maintains an ongoing relationship with the Louisiana Board for Nursing Facility Examiners and the LNHA, and regularly participates as a trainer in their conferences, providing opportunities to further discuss nursing facilities' utilization of the MACs. The department is committed to maintaining a dynamic and up-to-date website about MACs and continuing to be readily accessible by telephone or email to answer questions and concerns about the MAC program. Further, DHH is committed to assisting nursing facilities with:

- Recognizing the benefits of the MAC.
- Defining the role of the MAC.
- Demonstrating how the MAC can make a positive impact to improve resident care.
- Demonstrating that MACs are worth the increased cost.

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. Erin Rabalais, DHH's Health Standards Section Director, at (225) 342-4997.

Sincerely,



Jerry Phillips  
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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