



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

May 31, 2018

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

The Honorable Taylor F. Barras, Speaker
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 94062, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9062

The Honorable Fred H. Mills, Jr., Chairman
Louisiana State Senate
Senate Health and Welfare Committee
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

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

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

Dear President Alario, Speaker Barras, and Honorable Chairs:

Senate Bill 93 (Act 50) of the 2011 Regular Session made the pilot Medication Attendants in Licensed Nursing Homes program permanent and required the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), to submit annual reports to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare. The annual report provides an update on the utilization of Medication Attendants Certified (MACs) to assist licensed nursing staff in the administration of certain medications in nursing facilities.

Currently, none of the state's licensed nursing facilities utilize the program, or employ MACs. There have been inquiries from certified nursing assistants (CNAs) who were trained in medication administration in other states and wished to transfer their certification to Louisiana, but none have completed the process given the lack of employment opportunities in Louisiana. Inquiries have also been received from Louisiana CNAs who are searching for a path to career advancement through the MAC program.

Background

Established in 2008, the initial MAC pilot program was the result of a collaborative effort by representatives of LDH, 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 the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). These entities felt that the utilization of MACs to administer certain medications would allow licensed nurses more time to work directly with residents. Other states utilize similar programs to Louisiana's, including: Texas, Kansas, Maryland, Ohio, Utah, Maryland, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri.

After the pilot program began, four Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) were initially trained and certified as MACs in 2010, 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 long 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 facilities. Again, there are currently no licensed nursing facilities in Louisiana that utilize the program, or that employ MACs.

Potential Impacts of the MAC Program

Positive Impacts

There are many potentially positive impacts that could result from licensed nursing facilities utilizing the MAC program. Some of these include:

- Relieving licensed nurses of routine medication duties, allowing the nurse the time to provide more one-on-one care and provide more individualized attention to Residents;
- Enhancing the nurses' ability to respond more quickly to Resident's needs;
- Decreasing situations of burn-out and overtime of licensed nurses which in turn could result in 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 activities of 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 staffing hours.

Concerns

Although initially enthusiastic, the response from nursing facilities has almost completely gone away since the pilot program began.

There are several concerns regarding the MAC program that have arisen, including:

- It is reasonable to expect that MACs should be paid a higher hourly wage than CNAs without this additional certification, because they shoulder the additional responsibility of medication administration. This could result in an increased cost for nursing facilities that utilize MACs, although it is conceivable that a decrease in nurse overtime reimbursement could mitigate this cost.
- 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.
- There is a lack of public education regarding the function of the MACs.
- Licensed nurses could be uncomfortable with supervising what they perceive as less qualified staff.
- Licensed nurses fear that MACs threaten their job security.

May 31, 2018

Page 3

LDH's Management of the MAC Program

Revisions to the LDH rule on Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Programs, published in the June 2012, edition of the Louisiana Register, addressed some of the initial concerns expressed by the nursing facilities, including:

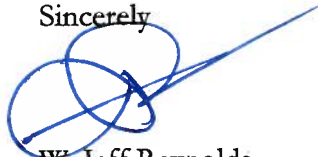
- Allowing nursing facilities to include MACs in required nursing hours;
- Making the MAC program permanent and available to nursing homes on an on-going basis; and
- Allowing training to occur in multiple approved training entities.

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 facilities, and the role of BRCC in teaching the curriculum.

LDH will continue to utilize every opportunity to educate nursing facilities, facility staff, residents, their families and the general public about utilizing the MACs. LDH maintains an ongoing relationship with the Louisiana Board of Examiners for Nursing Facility Administrators (LaBENFA) and LNHA, participating regularly as a trainer in their conferences as well as a member of their liaison committee. The Department continues to maintain a section of their website on the MAC program and is readily accessible by telephone or email to answer questions and concerns. Further, LDH is committed to assisting nursing facilities 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 LDH has made in managing the MAC 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Jeff Reynolds', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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
The David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library