

The Story The Numbers Tell Us

Q2, June 2024

We're always eager to hear from assisted living professionals to learn about the latest trends and experiences with recent recertification surveys and ombudsman visits. Every month, Mass-ALA asks its members to fill out a questionnaire about any visits they've had from EOEA, the Ombudsman, OSHA, or any other governing entity. Your input helps us identify issues and trends, develop advocacy initiatives and strategies, and recognize training needs in the assisted living sector. Rest assured, the questionnaires are anonymous, and we never share the names of those who submit them. Thanks for your help!

Between January and May a series of interactions were recorded involving various visits and assessments. A total of 50 submissions to the questionnaire were received. In January, there were 18 total interactions, including six recertification visits, ten ombudsman visits, one initial certification, and one EOEA visit conducted, with no OSHA visits reported. February saw 11 total interactions with six recertification visits and four ombudsman visits, and there were no initial certifications or OSHA visits. March recorded eight interactions: three recertification visits, three ombudsman visits, and two other EOEA visits, with no initial certifications or OSHA visits. April had the fewest interactions, totaling 5, including two recertification visits and three ombudsman visits, with no initial certifications or OSHA visits. May had eight interactions with three certification renewals and five ombudsman visits.

During recertification visits in January, five of the six conducted were completed without prior notice. In February, all six recertification visits were conducted without prior notice, covering June 2022 to February 2024. The visits covered a varied timeframe from July 2022 to January 2024. In March, all recertification visits were conducted without prior notice, spanning January 2022 to March 2024. April's recertification visits, similarly conducted without notice, covered May 2022 to April 2024. and were marked by findings that were yet to be detailed, with feedback highlighting the professional conduct of representatives. Feedback from these visits included a mix of responses. The comments ranged from only having a few findings and some discrepancies to making a plan to correct those findings to positive feedback from the representatives with minimal extended work needed for correction. The feedback was generally positive, highlighting professional and fair interactions. The feedback included praise for the EOEA representative and positive interactions regarding resident support. April's recertification visits were marked by findings that were yet to be detailed, with feedback highlighting the professional conduct of representatives. However, issues were noted in turning in items requested after 11 am,

which the EOEA representative did not accept. Our data collected from the questionnaires closely represent the data shared with us from EOEA on their two quarterly calls this year. Being prepared with all the correct information, organized, and ready to be audited is the key takeaway from the responses we have received.

Deficiencies identified included delayed emergency call responses, incomplete or missing QA documentation, inconsistent training, and compliance issues, facility maintenance concerns like missing locks, a new focus on fall prevention programs, physical checks of the grounds and mechanical room, and generator. All the months highlighted similar issues, emphasizing the importance of preparedness for unannounced surveys.

Interactions with EOEA representatives were generally reported as positive, with professional and supportive behavior noted. Communities often had to submit corrective action plans, which were typically accepted, though some requested more guidance on maintaining compliance. Ombudsman visits were mainly positive and supportive, offering training and education during their visits.

Ombudsman visits during January primarily focused on routine introductions, family complaints, staffing concerns, and discussions about resident care levels. The feedback was mostly positive. In February, there was a visit from a complaint filed, and feedback highlighted areas for improvement. In March, ombudsman visits addressed safety issues, and the feedback was positive. In April, visits ensured the presence of “Know Your Rights” posters and addressed unfounded complaints with generally positive feedback. May had two visits, which were scheduled trainings from the Ombudsman to the staff and residents regarding Resident Rights.

When asked what resources Mass-ALA could provide helpful, training and education were reportedly appreciated, including Bootcamp, QA/QI, and other educational events that helped providers prepare for visits. However, there were calls from communities for more detailed guidance on addressing regulations and best practices for ombudsman interactions. Mass-ALA truly appreciates your feedback as we continually look to provide you with the resources you need to remain compliant. The feedback from the questionnaires was beneficial in identifying common deficiencies and giving us areas to focus Mass-ALA’s training efforts for upcoming trainings.

It is important to note that nearly all the areas highlighted in this article were covered at our Regulation Training which was held on June 20 at The College of The Holy Cross. The Leadership Panel reviewed topics such as fall prevention programs, QA/QI documentation, current trends, site visits, training and compliance systems, and useful audit tools. Our attorney presenters provided information on landlord-tenant law and negotiated risk

agreements, highlighting fee challenges, loopholes, and risk reviews. The day concluded with the Ombudsman and EOEA connecting resident rights and regulations.

We really appreciate our members and governing bodies, and we'd love to hear your feedback through these questionnaires. Your input helps us offer various helpful training sessions like our Regulation Training, ensuring that we provide our valued members with the latest information and learning opportunities to achieve the best results.

Barbara Southall

Director of Education

781.622.5999 x103

BSouthall@mass-ala.org