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Executive Deputy Commissioner

March 4, 2016

DAL: DHCBS 16-02
Subject: Transportation Assistance Level
           (TAL) Classification
           Implementation for Home Care
           and Hospice Providers

Dear Administrator:

The New York State Department of Health's (NYSDOH) Office of Health Emergency Preparedness (OHEP), and Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management (OPCHSM), work together to strengthen emergency preparedness and response for and by healthcare providers. This letter provides information about a new tool that all home care and hospice providers will be required to use during a planned evacuation that will enhance our collective ability to successfully respond to catastrophic events.

OHEP and OPCHSM have worked with preparedness partners, such as the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA), the New York State Association of Health Care Providers (HCP), the New York State Office of Emergency Management (NYS OEM) and the Fire Department City of New York (FDNY), to establish a system that is recognized and used throughout the state employing standardized Transportation Assistance Level (TAL) classifications. Use of the TALs classifications provides a universal tool to rapidly assess and identify home care and hospice patients during a planned evacuation, to ensure that appropriate transportation resources are deployed.

The NYSDOH Home and Community Based Care Program requires the statewide adoption of the TALs categorization system for homecare and hospice patients to standardize and streamline the evacuation process, particularly in a regional or statewide event involving external transportation resources.

TALs are intended for patient transport categorization by any healthcare professional familiar with transportation modalities. The TALs are not to be confused with the Home Health Agency Patient Classification Levels (Levels 1, 2, and 3, referenced in the Dear Administrator Letter issued on May 10, 2005) which are used to classify patient priority of care needs, but not to identify the transportation resources needed by each patient. TALs are intended for use during a planned evacuation and not intended for use during an emergent situation such as a fire.

Effective June 1, 2016, home care agencies and hospices will be required to incorporate the TALs status for each patient listed on the agency's patient roster. The current TALs category (TAL 1, 2, or 3) must be included for each patient listed and updated at the time of any change in statue/reassessment.

Under the TALs categorization system, patients should be categorized into one of three mobility levels:

- Non-ambulatory (TAL-1) – those who require transport by stretcher.
- Wheelchair (TAL-2) – those unable to walk due to physical and/or medical condition.
- Ambulatory (TAL-3) – those who are able to walk without physical assistance.

The purpose, objectives and details of the TALs classification levels are described in the attached "TALS Guidance Document". Information will be presented by OHEP and OPCHSM staff via webinar sessions during February and March 2016 on TALs and the Home Care Emergency Response Survey. Information for the dates and times of webinar sessions and availability or archived WebEx's will be communicated through the Health Commerce System.

The NYSDOH considers the use of TALs to be critical in ensuring safe and timely evacuation of patients.

Please contact Katharine Logan, OHEP at (518) 474-2893 or katharine.logan@health.ny.gov with questions pertaining to TALs classifications. For questions related to Emergency Preparedness requirements, please contact the Division of Home and Community Based Services at 518-408-1638 or homecare@health.ny.gov.

Thank you in advance for participating in the ongoing commitment to emergency preparedness and patient safety.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Primeau
Director, Office of Health Emergency
Preparedness

Keith W. Servis
Deputy Director, Office of Primary Care &
Health Systems Management

Attachment