

MDS Alert

PEPPER: Your PEPPER Is Now Available -- How To Access It

New: Comparison group includes all SNFs in the same state.

Your Fourth Quarter fiscal year 2013 Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report (PEPPER) is now available for download. But don't expect to get a paper copy.

TMF Health Quality Institute, a contractor for the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS), has released PEPPERS for skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) containing statistics through September 2013.

Follow 6 Steps to Access Your PEPPER

To obtain your SNF's PEPPER, TMF instructs that your Chief Executive Officer, President or Administrator should:

1. Review the Secure PEPPER Access Guide (<http://pepperresources.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=WArredMVOuE=&tabid=186&mid=648&forcedownload=true>).
2. Visit the Secure PEPPER Access page (<http://pepperresources.org/PEPPER/SecurePEPPERAccess.aspx>).
3. Review the instructions and obtain the information required to authenticate access.
4. Click on the "Access Secure Portal" button for SNFs (<https://securefile.tmf.org/>).
5. Download your PEPPER.

Your PEPPER will be available to download for one year, and the report will be in a Microsoft Excel format, TMF says. Your previous 2012 PEPPER will also become available via the secure portal, but not until this summer.

Sign up: If you're on the edge of your seat for your PEPPERS' release, you can get email notifications when the reports become available by signing up on the PEPPERresources.org website. Links to the sign-up portal are on the site's homepage.

Beware of 2 PEPPER Changes

With this release, TMF has announced that it will no longer mail PEPPERS to providers who previously received them by mail. Instead, you'll now need to access your reports via the secure portal on PEPPERresources.org. Or, if you've been receiving your PEPPERS through QualityNet, you can continue to do so, TMF states.

Watch out: Another big change to note is that for this PEPPER release, the state comparison group now includes all SNFs in a state, and not just those in the same MAC jurisdiction as before, TMF reports. "As a result, state percentiles will be available for most SNFs; state percentiles will differ from the previous PEPPER release."