Long-Term Acute Care Hospital, Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility, and Inpatient Psychiatric Facility PEPPER Webinar

Questions and Answers

August 25, 2026

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1. PEPPER Access

The following subsection describes how to gain PEPPER access.

1.1 How do I identify my organization's Authorized Official or Access Manager?

The External User Services (EUS) Help Desk can help identify your organization's Authorized Official (AO) or Access Manager (AM). The EUS Help Desk can also answer questions about submitting a Staff End User (SEU) role request with the PEPPER business function, if needed.

Note: You must have a pending role in the Identity & Access (I&A) Management System before the EUS Help Desk can provide the name of your organization's AO or AM.

PECOS EUS Help Desk:

Phone: 1-866-484-8049

Email: EUS_Support@cms.hhs.gov

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. ET

Website: https://eus.cms.gov

1.2 Does access from the previous PEPPER application carry over to the new PEPPER Portal?

Users may need to establish access to the new PEPPER Portal. AOs and AMs can access PEPPERs. SEUs with an approved PEPPER business function can download their organization's PEPPER after an AO or AM grants access.

1.3 Are the credentials used for the PEPPER Portal the same as PECOS credentials?

Yes. Users sign in to the PEPPER Portal using the same CMS Identity & Access (I&A) Management System credentials used for the Provider Enrollment, Chain, and Ownership System (PECOS) and the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES). Users must also have the PEPPER business function and an eligible role, such as AO, AM, or an approved SEU.

1.4 Where can CMS contractors or other non-provider users send access questions?

Send questions to the PEPPER Help Desk at CMS_CBRPEPPER@cms.hhs.gov.

2. PEPPER Data and Interpretation

The following subsections address questions about target areas, comparison data, and reportable data.

2.1 Where can I find coding-focused and admission-necessity-target areas?

Select the applicable PEPPER type on the PEPPER Training and Resources page, and then open the User Guide for that facility type. The User Guide provides target area definitions and calculation details.

2.2 Does PEPPER adjust comparisons for patient demographic differences, such as a high geriatric population?

No. PEPPER does not adjust for differences in patient populations. Jurisdiction and state percentiles are intended to serve as general benchmarks for the facility.

2.3 What does an outlier status of "No data" mean?

It means that fewer than 11 discharges met the numerator criteria for the target area during the fiscal year (FY); therefore, the results are not displayed.

2.4 Does PEPPER include Medicare Fee-for-Service or all Medicare data?

PEPPER is based on Medicare Fee-for-Service data. Medicare Advantage data are not currently included.

3. PEPPER Release Frequency

The following subsections describe the current PEPPER release schedule.

3.1 How often are PEPPERs released?

Short-Term Acute Care Hospital (STACH) PEPPERs are released quarterly. Long-Term Acute Care Hospital (LTACH), Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility (IRF), Inpatient Psychiatric Facility (IPF), and all other PEPPER types are released annually.

3.2 Are there plans to produce PEPPERs more frequently?

No changes are currently planned. The PEPPER release schedule remains quarterly for Short-Term Acute Care Hospital (STACH) PEPPERS and annual for all other PEPPER types.

4. IPF-Specific Questions

The following subsections summarize questions specific to the IPF PEPPER.

4.1 How is the comorbidities target area interpreted for a stand-alone inpatient psychiatric facility?

The numerator is the number of discharges with at least one comorbidity reported on the claim, and the denominator is all discharges. In the webinar example, 71 of 391 discharges met the numerator criteria, resulting in a target area percentage of 18.2% and a low-outlier status.

4.2 What information is displayed on the IPF Top DRGs report?

The IPF Top DRGs report displays facility-level and jurisdiction-level information for diagnosis-related groups (DRGs) with at least 11 discharges. The report also includes the national average length of stay (ALOS) for the jurisdiction's Top DRGs.

4.3 Does the IPF PEPPER include a national Top DRGs table?

No. The IPF PEPPER includes facility-level and jurisdiction-level Top DRG tables but does not currently include a national Top DRGs table.

4.4 Are IPF PEPPER results stratified by psychiatric facility type, such as geriatric psychiatry?

No. IPF PEPPER data are not stratified by psychiatric facility type. All claims that meet the IPF inclusion criteria described in the User Guide are considered for inclusion in the IPF PEPPER.

4.5 If a facility is no longer certified for inpatient psychiatry, is any action required, and will future claims appear in the Short-Term Acute Care Hospital PEPPER?

No. No action is required solely because of prior IPF PEPPER results, as PEPPER is an educational tool. If the organization now bills as a Short-Term Acute Care Hospital (STACH), eligible claims may be included in the STACH PEPPER. Future IPF PEPPERs would require sufficient eligible data and an active facility identifier for the IPF provider type.

5. IRF-Specific Questions

The following subsections summarize questions specific to the IRF PEPPER.

5.1 What additional reports are included in the IRF PEPPER?

The IRF PEPPER includes Top Case Mix Group (CMG) reports, average length of stay (ALOS) by CMG tier, and ALOS by discharge destination for the most recent fiscal year.

5.2 How does the IRF Top CMGs report work?

The IRF Top CMGs report ranks up to 20 CMGs based on facility discharge count for the most recent fiscal year. For each reportable CMG, the report displays the discharge count, the

proportion of total discharges, and the facility ALOS. CMGs with tied discharge counts are displayed. CMGs with fewer than 11 discharges are not reported.

6. Webinar Materials

The following information describes how to access webinar materials and related PEPPER resources.

6.1 Where will the webinar materials be available?

The webinar recording, presentation slides, transcript, and Questions and Answers document will be available on the PEPPER website under Training and Resources.