Coordinating and Aligning COVID-19 Nursing Home Infection Control Practice Assessment Activities

1. **Infection control practices play a critical role in protecting nursing home residents and staff from COVID-19.**
   - We appreciate all your hard work and efforts to put robust infection control and prevention systems in place
   - To ensure the strongest possible defense, we must continuously assess and improve current infection prevention and control practices

2. **CDC and CMS have released complementary assessment tools that nursing homes and their state partners can use to evaluate their current infection prevention and control practices and identify areas for improvement.**
   - CMS has developed a COVID-19 Focused Survey for Nursing Homes, which is used during onsite surveys, but it is also a nursing home self-assessment tool. This tool:
     o Examines many aspects of infection control that are essential to COVID-19 prevention
     o Focuses on *Quality Assurance* and was designed in accordance with regulatory requirements
     o Was informed by guidance and input from CDC
     o Does not take the place of a formal regulatory survey when used for self-assessment, but can be used by nursing homes to identify gaps and areas for improvement
   - CDC has developed an Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) tool that aligns with its current COVID-19 Guidance for Nursing Homes and Other Long Term Care Settings. This tool:
     o Resembles the CMS tool in that it provides a systematic review of infection control practices for COVID-19 in nursing homes
     o Differs from the CMS tool in that its primary intended use is for facilitated assessments that are aimed at *Quality Improvement*
     o Was designed for use by Healthcare-Associated Infection (HAI) Programs, health departments, and other quality partners, who are able to administer the tool in-person or remotely (i.e., Tele-ICAR) and provide advice and coaching

3. **Because CDC and CMS tools were developed for related but distinct purposes, nursing homes will see the greatest benefit from completing *both*.**
   - Many of the domains and concepts covered by the CDC and CMS tools are similar, so completing one tool will help with completion of the other

4. **Close coordination between regulatory and quality improvement partners will help nursing homes apply the CDC and CMS assessment tools and translate their results into action.**
   - At the federal level, CDC and CMS are working actively to ensure our efforts are complementary and to support effective and coordinated activities at state and local levels (see item #5 below)
   - At the state and local levels, representatives from the following entities should be similarly engaged in active communication and collaboration efforts (e.g., in the context of a Long Term Care Preparedness Task Force that is part of the state/local COVID-19 emergency response effort):
     o State and Local Health Departments, including HAI Programs
     o State Survey Agencies and other regulatory partners
     o Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs)
     o Industry/professional representatives
     o Nursing home facilities

5. **CDC and CMS will continue to offer state partners, such as health departments, regulatory agencies and quality improvement organizations, a range of resources and options for technical assistance to support their engagement with nursing homes that can be adapted to local needs and capacities. This help includes:**
   - Engaging nursing home leadership (administrators, clinical)
   - Providing webinars and other trainings for front line staff
   - Prioritizing nursing homes for Tele-ICAR assessments
   - Staffing ICAR activities
   - Developing systems to track and share information regarding Tele-ICAR activity and other aspects of nursing home support, such as COVID-19 surveillance, outbreak response and on-site visits