

CMS PROVIDES GUIDANCE FOR NURSING FACILITY GARDENS

CMS released a Survey & Certification letter today providing guidance for nursing homes that desire to utilize on-site gardens to provide fresh produce for residents. After numerous inquiries from facilities, CMS confirmed that residents can benefit from home-grown foods as long as food-borne illness dangers are mitigated to the greatest extent possible.

The facility should follow safe food handling practices once foods are harvested and brought into the kitchen for preparation. Additionally, the facility must have in place policies and procedures for maintaining the garden. Such actions will permit the facility to remain in compliance with 42 CFR 483.35(i), Sanitary Conditions, and the related survey tag, F371.

In the event of an outbreak of a food-borne illness, surveyors will request the facility's policies and procedures related to the garden if the facility's main food source has been ruled out as the cause. The facility must immediately report any outbreak of a food-borne illness, regardless of the cause, to the local health department. The facility must also comply with any local or state requirements related to growing food on-site.

Should you have any questions, please contact:

Todd Selby at 317.977.1440 or tselby@hallrender.com;

Brian Jent at 317.977.1402 or bjent@hallrender.com; or

David Bufford at 502.568.9368 or dbufford@hallrender.com,

or your regular Hall Render attorney.