

# HHS Announces Infection Control Surveys for ASCs

Testifying before Congress today about preventing infections acquired in health care settings, an official from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced plans to launch a new survey tool for ASCs. The ASC Association will provide more information on this new HHS initiative as it becomes available. A copy of the HHS official's remarks directed specifically at ASCs follows.

"To help prevent serious infections resulting from services performed in Ambulatory Surgical Centers, CMS will use the funds provided in the ARRA [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009] to implement the nationwide application of a new infection control survey tool developed in consultation with CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and a case tracer methodology that tracks a patient's care from admission to discharge. In addition, CMS will use the ARRA funds to survey Ambulatory Surgical Centers using this survey application at the rate of approximately once every three years during this national pilot.

A CMS [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services]/CDC pilot program tested the enhanced survey process in Maryland, Oklahoma, and North Carolina in 2008 and demonstrated superior results in the ability to detect deficient infection control practices. The particular focus on Ambulatory Surgical Centers for this funding was chosen because the available infection control tool was developed for Ambulatory Surgical Centers and because of the likely continuing infection control deficiencies in this setting.

The primary use of these dollars will be to pay for the expansion of Ambulatory Surgical Center surveys (both in quality, time, and number) using the new infection control tool and case tracer methodology. The funds will allow states to hire additional surveyors (one to four per state dependent upon Ambulatory Surgical Center growth), which will increase a state's capacity to maintain expected levels of Ambulatory Surgical Center inspections while building greater capacity to use the improved survey tool nationwide. In recent years, funding for survey and certification activities supported recertification of Ambulatory Surgical Centers once every ten to fourteen years; this new funding will enable CMS to perform targeted survey and certification activities much more frequently."