



Pioneer
Network

Changing the culture of aging in the 21st century

Alice Bonner
James Merrill
CMS

Request for Clarification
F-Tag 468
Submitted May 22, 2012

Question: F Tag 468 specifically refers to handrails on both sides of the corridor. Specifically, it states “Equip corridors with firmly secured handrails on each side” and the Interpretive Guidelines 483.70(h)(3) state: “Secured handrails” means handrails that are firmly affixed to the wall.

This suggests to me that the intent of F468 is to make sure that, where handrails are present, they should be securely attached. However, I have come across a number of care communities who have told me that they are being told this means that there must be handrails on both sides of a corridor, and therefore there must be a wall or other suitable partition on both sides of the corridor for the handrails to be attached to.

Clearly, there are open gaps in the handrail systems- they don’t go in front of doors or in front of rooms that are open to a corridor. But F468 is being used to not allow the corridor to be open to a larger open space, even if that space is constructed to meet corridor construction requirements and has the necessarily fire detection and/or sprinkler systems.

Respectfully,

Margaret P. Calkins, PhD. on behalf of
The Pioneer Network

From: Merrill, James J. (CMS/OCSQ) [James.Merrill@cms.hhs.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, August 01, 2012 2:43 PM
To: Margaret Calkins
Cc: CMS DNH Triage Team; Weinstein, Jay H. (CMS/OCSQ); Bonner, Alice (CMS/OCSQ); Cathy Lieblich
Subject: Letter to CMS Re: F465 - Handrails in Corridors, Tracking #254

Dear Ms. Calkins:

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the requirements for corridor handrails in a nursing home, 42CFR483.70(h)(3), F468. After careful review and research, it has been determined that the requirement is to require hand rails on corridor walls when there is a corridor wall to attach the handrail too. In reviewing the 2000 edition of the Life Safety Code, NFPA 101 there is no definition of what a corridor consists of such as walls on each side of an exit corridor. There are several instances in the LSC that discuss “open areas to the corridor “ and there is no requirement for any type of wall along the line of where a handrail could be affixed in these discussions.

This leads me to conclude that a hand rail is only required where a handrail can be affixed to a wall or some supporting elements and that areas open to a corridor such as a room or an alcove would not require a handrail across the open space.

I would like to caution you that 42CFR483.70(h)(3) is a Federal requirement and a State could have a requirement that is more stringent such as requiring hand rails to be installed across open areas parallel to the corridor to assist in resident ambulation and that is acceptable to CMS.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please forward them to the following email: DNH_TriageTeam@cms.hhs.gov. We value your interest and thank you for helping to optimize the health, safety and quality of life for people living in nursing homes.

Sincerely,

/s/

James Merrill

Life Safety Engineer

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Survey & Certification

Division of Nursing Homes

DNH-approved Disclaimer: *The information provided in this email is only intended to be general summary information. It is not intended to take the place of statute, regulations or official CMS policy.*