

Chapter 7 MDS Coordinator

Definition

MDS Coordinator stands for Minimum Data Set Coordinator. “The MDS Coordinator potentially interacts with staff across the nursing home to coordinate care processes of resident assessment and care planning.”

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1472871/>).

MDS Coordinators are responsible for submitting assessment data periodically for residents of Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing homes. This data is what the government expects to receive on residents of nursing homes who are receiving Medicare or Medicaid.

Qualifications:

There are no standard qualifications for an MDS Coordinator. Common qualifications include nursing licensure, completion of continuing education/training in MDS reporting and assessment. There is also an MDS Certification course that many employers require.

Many MDS Coordinators are Registered Nurses. Nevertheless, I have known MDS Coordinators who are Licensed Practical Nurses.

Where do MDS Coordinators work?

Long term care & skilled care facilities (traditionally called “nursing homes”).

Resources:

MDS Coordinator Certification (here are 2 main associations that offer certification):

1. <http://www.aanac.org/information-resources/mds30>
2. NASPAC

Interview with an MDS Coordinator

I had the opportunity to interview Charmaine Kelly, RN BSN

1. What is your exact job title?

MDS Coordinator

2. How did you hear about your current position?

I have been doing MDS since it first came out. In Connecticut, where I used to live, each nurse does their own MDS.

3. What made you decide to apply for your current position?

When I moved to Florida in 2002 I applied for the MDS position because it was paying more money than a lot of the other bed side nursing positions. I needed the income at the time of the move and I ended up staying with it.

4. What was the application/interview experience like compared with prior nursing interview question for other jobs?

During the interview, questions were asked about the MDS process. You have to prove that you have experience, or knowledge of the process.

5. Was there anything you feel in your background or that you communicated during the application process that you think made you stand out from other applicants.

Yes, I had prior experience in this specialty.

6. If this is not your first MDS Coordinator position, what other MDS positions have you held?

Since moved to Florida, I have held three MDS positions. Terraces of Lake Worth, Rehab center of Palm Beaches, and Boulevard Rehab.

7. If this is not your first MDS position, can you recall your first one? What was the application process like? What skills/education/experience did you have that you feel helped you to get that 1st position?

I needed at least one year of nursing experience. I had experience working in long term and skilled nursing care facilities, so I was familiar with the setting, documentation, and government regulations. I believe this helped me to get hired. I was also very open and willing to learn.

8. How long have you had this position?

I have been in my current position for 8 years.

9. Can you give us a brief overview or a “day in the life of a.....” what you do day to day?

I review patient charts for documentation. I do a lot of data input, and care planning. I also participate in care plan meetings with patients and family members.

10. What is the most pleasant/rewarding thing about your current position?

For a while I was looking for a way to get experience that was not at the bedside. I enjoy nursing, but I was ready for a position that was no longer at the bedside. That was my desire at the time of applying for MDS Coordinator.

11. What do you dislike most about your current position?

It can be stressful at times. This is especially due to the deadlines. There are strict reporting deadlines that MDS Coordinators have to meet.

12. What skills do you think a nurse needs the most to thrive in a position like yours?

You need to have strong knowledge of the MDS process and the government regulations that nursing homes need to follow related to the process.

13. What general advice would you give to someone considering a position in MDS Coordination?

Take MDS certification course, and try to get some type of experience working in a nursing home.

14. What excites you most about MDS? Do you see potential for growth or movement to other MDS related positions?

There are opportunities for promotion to a corporate position as an MDS Consultant.

What's next?

1. **Do your research.**

If MDS Coordination sounds like something you are interested in, start searching online for more information. Also start your offline research; perhaps talking to people about the position. If you currently work in a long term/skilled care facility, you can reach out to the current MDS Coordinator to ask questions. If you do not work in a nursing home, perhaps you can visit one and ask to speak the MDS Coordinator. As always, use your discretion before approaching

people in your work place about changing positions. Some places are more open than others to people transitioning.

2. Start reaching out for career opportunities. Remember, not all opportunities are advertised. If you haven't already read my article about how to get jobs that are not even advertised [click here](#).
3. Update your resume and learn how to [interview powerfully](#).
4. Be open. I believe that the more open you are to opportunities, the more likely you are to see them. There are opportunities all around us, once we look for them and allow them to enrich our lives.

If you have any questions/feedback, or would like to update me on your progress in finding a different nursing position, please feel free to email me: Alicia@TransitionsInNursing.com