

The Survey Process -- Scope and Severity

The federal government's enforcement process requires the Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division to assign scope and severity levels for deficiencies. After these have been determined, they are given a letter designation.

The level of the deficiency is determined both by scope, how widespread the problem is, and severity, how much potential or actual harm it has caused to residents.

Level	Scope	Severity
A	Isolated	No actual harm, potential for minimal harm
B	Pattern	No actual harm, potential for minimal harm
C	Widespread	No actual harm, potential for minimal harm
D	Isolated	No actual harm, potential for more than minimal harm
E	Pattern	No actual harm, potential for more than minimal harm
F	Widespread	No actual harm, potential for more than minimal harm
G	Isolated	Actual harm that is not immediate jeopardy
H	Pattern	Actual harm that is not immediate jeopardy
I	Widespread	Actual harm that is not immediate jeopardy
J	Isolated	Immediate jeopardy to resident health or safety
K	Pattern	Immediate jeopardy to resident health or safety
L	Widespread	Immediate jeopardy to resident health or safety

Scope:

Assesses how widespread the deficiency is in the nursing home. There are three levels of scope:

- An isolated problem-when one or a very limited number of residents are affected
- A pattern of problems-when more than a limited number of residents are affected or when the same problem has occurred in several locations in the facility and/or the same number of residents have been affected by repeated occurrence of the deficient practice;
- Widespread scope means the problems causing the deficiencies are found throughout the facility and/or there are systemic failures in the nursing home that have affected or have the potential to affect a large proportion of the residents.

Severity:

Assesses how much harm may occur or has occurred to residents as a result of the deficiency.

There are four levels of severity:

- Level 1: Represents no actual harm but has potential for minimal harm;

- Level 2: Represents no actual harm, but potential for more than minimal harm. A level 2 deficiency could result in minimal physical, mental or psychosocial discomfort or has the ability to compromise the resident's ability to maintain or achieve highest possible function;
- Level 3: Represents actual harm that is not immediate jeopardy (i.e. life-threatening). A level 3 deficiency means a resident has been negatively impacted and his/her ability to maintain or reach the highest functional level has been compromised;
- Level 4: Represents immediate jeopardy to resident health or safety. A Level 4 deficiency requires immediate corrective action because serious injury, harm, impairment or death has been caused, or could be caused to residents.

Deficiencies are cited at the highest severity level. If a deficient practice has minimal impact on most affected residents, but has a severe impact on only one of the residents, that deficiency will be cited at the highest severity level observed.