THE RYBAR GROUP

Your Secret to Success: External Coding Audits

Question

What educational path do you recommend for a biller who would like to move into coding?

Question

If a practice uses a billing company, should they be included in audits?

Question

What criteria should we use to evaluate potential audit vendors?

Question

How do you engage physicians in reviewing audit results?

Response

In my career, I've found that billers make great coders. For this career path, consider a credential such as the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) from the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC). This credential doesn't require a degree or prior experience and they offer a variety of training modalities. If you're focused on the hospital side, look into the American Health Information Management Association as well. Both the AAPC and AHIMA have good options.

Response

Yes, your organization is ultimately responsible for the accurate billing of your services, even if billing is outsourced. It's arguably more critical for you to audit your billing company than internal staff as you put a lot of trust in them. They should be audited regularly both by your organization and your external audit vendor.

Response

Price is certainly a main consideration, but also look at what audit system they use. There are a lot software options for coding audits available and they all have slightly different features. Additionally, you'll want to see a sample of their deliverable and consider your organization's needs. Perhaps individual audit reports work well for you, or you may want a full narrative explanation of findings. Also consider education options that they provide. Pay attention to references and be strategic in the questions you ask to focus on measurable items such as turnaround time and communication.

Response

Be collaborative, not punitive. The intent of the audit is to identify opportunities and is an opportunity to help the providers. Be clear and concise in your communication. If it works for your providers, make it competitive to encourage them to get better audit scores. Or, tie money to it, especially if they're paid based on wRVUs. We're all more responsive when it affects our bottom line.