

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### Ask a Billing Expert: Banish Modifier -58 Confusion

**Question:** I'm not clear on the ways modifier -58 can be used, and I keep getting denials. Would you explain when and how to use this modifier?

North Carolina Subscriber

**Answer:** Modifier -58 often leaves billing offices in surgical practices pulling their hair out in frustration, but you can escape this fate by learning the basics.

This modifier indicates a "staged or related procedure or service by the same physician during the post-operative period" and is used most often by ophthalmologists, plastic surgeons and orthopedic surgeons, says **Quin Buechner, MS, M.Div, CPC, CHCO**, president of ProActive Consultants in Cumberland, Wis. And all in all, "it's a big pain in the rear," he says.

The problem is that many providers don't understand that there are technically three ways you can use -58, says **Margie Vaught, CPC, CCS-T**, an independent consultant in Ellensburg, Wash.:

1. to indicate a planned, or staged, procedure
2. to show a more extensive procedure following a less extensive one
3. to indicate a diagnostic procedure followed by the therapeutic procedure.

The biggest mistake people make with modifier -58 is assuming they can't use it if the surgeon didn't plan to do the procedures, Vaught says. "Well, that's not the only thing the modifier is for," she reminds providers.