

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Reader Question: Safeguard Your Office Funds With This Checklist

Question: Do you have any recommendations for how we can protect our office against embezzlement by employees in the billing office?

Louisiana Subscriber

Answer: The key to safeguarding against embezzlement and financial errors is separation of financial duties in the billing office. Here's how:

- 1. Have every front-desk employee double-check their daily posted balance** by having a fellow employee count all the cash and checks.
- 2. Make sure the employee who performs the daily close** is not one of the people who post payments or the person who collects all the payments from the day.
- 3. In small practices with few billing staff**, the office manager and/or physician should be involved in the daily finances to increase accountability. For example, the office manager and/or physician can review an end-of-day report to balance with the daily collected receipts.
- 4. Put controls on your practice management system** so staff can log in and access only what is necessary for them to do their jobs.
- 5. Every computer should have a separate name and password**, and staff should change passwords regularly.
- 6. Pay close attention to the day's voids and adjustments** -- tampering with these is the easiest way to pocket a cash copay or other payment. "It is vital that the doctor and the office manager review the day's receipts and an end-of-day report," says **David Gibson, OD, FAAO**, of Lubbock, Texas. "Make sure employees know you are looking over their shoulders and know the system as well as -- or better than -- they do."
- 7. Let someone else balance the books.** "I now reconcile the checkbook when the statement comes, instead of the person who makes the deposits," says Gibson. "The more people who are involved -- within limits, of course -- the less likely you are to be hit."