

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### Reader Questions: Check State Rules for Records Copying

**Question:** We received a faxed request/authorization to release records to another physician's office. The treating physician wishes us to charge the patient a flat fee, in addition to the cost of pages, because it is a very large file. My understanding is that we should not charge a fee for this. Which is correct?

North Carolina Subscriber

**Answer:** It is legal to charge a reasonable fee for making copies of the records. Some offices do charge, but others provide the copies as a patient courtesy. How much you can charge varies by state. For example, according to North Carolina statutes, you are allowed to charge a maximum of:

1. 75 cents per page for the first 25 pages
2. 50 cents per page for pages 26-100
3. 25 cents for each page in excess of 100.

The state permits you to charge a minimum fee of \$10. All these amounts are inclusive of searching, handling, copying and mailing costs.

**Smart:** If a third party, such as an insurance carrier or the patient's attorney, is requesting the patient's record, make sure the patient's authorization is authentic. Err on the side of caution and authenticate the request - inform the patient that your office has received a request for these records to make sure he authorized such a release. Written consent to release records is not mandatory, but it's a good idea.

**Do this:** Search for your state's maximum medical records copying charges online at [www.lamblawoffice.com/medical-records-copying-charges.html](http://www.lamblawoffice.com/medical-records-copying-charges.html).