

## Psychiatry Coding & Reimbursement Alert

### Reader Question: Know Your Options When Considering Right Person to Write SOPs

**Question:** We are a 10-clinician practice that is rapidly expanding; we only had three clinicians on staff four years ago. This expansion means new administrative employees, which means more training. We are looking into having work procedures written up for each job at the practice, in order to streamline training and not put too much burden on department managers. Who is the best person for the job of writing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each job?

Louisiana Subscriber

**Answer:** Having detailed job procedures in place for each administrative position at your practice is a great idea. These documents can help with training, as it might in your situation. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) could also prove invaluable if you lose an employee suddenly.

After all, a front desk receptionist could walk in tomorrow and put in her notice. If that happens, who will know how to do her job until you can find a replacement?

There are several options for getting SOPs written. The option you choose depends entirely on your situation:

1. Task the manager of each department to produce a detailed procedure guide that explains how to do the jobs in their departments. For example, have your coding department manager write an SOP for your coding practices. You might want to tie this work into some kind of incentive, such as a small cash payout or a thankyou gift, so the managers don't think you're piling on extra work.
2. Have each department agree on a procedure for each job. This option can prove effective but time-consuming. In order to reach a consensus on the proper SOP for each job, departments will have to meet, collaborate, and discuss. This could take them away from time spent performing their normal job functions.
3. Hire a consulting firm to create SOPs for each job in your practice. This is costly but probably the most effective; after all, these are professional organizations that would dedicate time to writing SOPs for your practice.
4. Solicit technical writing expertise from local colleges. Place ads in local college newspapers looking for technical writers/technical communicators. Most colleges, even community colleges, have technical writing programs. Some four year schools even have graduate programs in technical writing/ communication. If the school has a technical writing/communication program, get in touch with the department head and ask them for advice on finding a promising student to write your SOPs. This may allow you to get the help you need at less than the cost of hiring a professional consultant (albeit with the benefit of less experience, too) while providing the student in question with valuable experience in the process.