

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: ICD-10 Delay Gives Hospice Breathing Room

Tip: Don't neglect ICD-9 training while you wait for the delayed ICD-10 codes to take effect.

An unexpected turn of events is giving hospices extra time to prepare for ICD-10, just when Medicare is turning up the heat on diagnosis coding in hospice. **President Obama** signed into law on April 1 a doc fix bill that also extends the ICD-10 code set transition until at least Oct. 1, 2015.

On one hand: Hospices that have been dragging their feet on OASIS C-1 and/or ICD-10 training are happy to have more time before they have to ramp up for implementation. "This gives providers another year to learn the changes," says **Patricia Jump** with Rice Lake, Wis.-based **Acorn's End Training & Consulting**.

"Although some agencies have invested a substantial amount of time and money into preparing for the ICD-10 transition, many agencies have not," says coding expert Andrea L. Manning with Manning Healthcare Group in Talkeetna, Alaska. Those home care agencies are breathing a sigh of relief, Manning adds.

On the other hand: "This is very frustrating for providers" who have started their ICD-10 implementation already or are trying to plan ICD-10 and OASIS-C1 implementation, Jump notes.

"Those who have been preparing all along are disappointed," Manning agrees.

Providers should "continue training and extend [their] implementation calendar to include another year of practice," says certified coder **Delaine Henry** with **Health Care Management and Billing Services** in Lafayette, La. "This takes the pressure off of smaller agencies who had a hard time finding funds to attend seminars with the larger consulting groups. This delay will give those agencies a chance to utilize the free training set up by CMS that is available via their site and YouTube."

"The projected changes will still happen at some point," Jump cautions. "The changes are not eliminated, just delayed."

Plus, now there's likely to be a need for additional training in ICD-9. "Coders still need training," say coding experts and CMS OASIS contractors **Linda Krulish** and **Sparkle Sparks** in an **OASIS Answers** blog post. "Since many seasoned ICD-9 coders left our ranks because they weren't interested in 'enduring one more change,' a large influx of brand new coders are making the coding decisions in our agencies and for our industry."

"Don't drop ICD-10 training but instead, based on the needs of the coders in your agency, consider adding ICD-9 training back into the mix to support your newer coders," Krulish and Sparks say.