

Eli's Hospice Insider

Reimbursement: Tackle Targeted Probe & Educate Challenges With These 5 Tips

Avoid this common contact pitfall.

Don't let Targeted Probe & Educate reviews bring down your rightfully earned Medicare payments - or your hospice altogether. Be sure you're ready as the MACs get their Targeted Probe & Educate programs up to full speed.

Consider these steps to make sure you survive and thrive, even in the face of overwhelming amounts of review under the program:

1. Focus on your contact person. Finding out what you're doing wrong, so you can fix the problem before your next round of TPE, is essential. Remember, after three rounds of TPE, your MAC will refer you to the CMS for "additional action," notes HHH MAC **CGS** on its TPE website. That referral could have some drastic results. That "additional action ... may include 100 percent prepay review, extrapolation, referral to a Recovery Auditor, or other action," CMS says on its TPE webpage.

So, "it is imperative when responding to the TPE [ADR] that you include the name and number of your designated contact person," stresses MAC **Palmetto GBA** in a Jan. 3 message to providers. "Our medical reviewer will contact your designated person prior to the conclusion of each TPE round to discuss the review summary."

How it works: "When you respond to the ADR include the contact information in the cover letter," Palmetto says in a recent question-and answer set on TPE. "The same reviewer is reviewing that entire set of records and he or she will become accustomed to who that contact person is. Please make sure to include the contact name(s) and a correct phone number."

Pay attention: Providers seem to be having trouble with this critical requirement. "We are experiencing some trouble getting in touch with and finding the appropriate person," Palmetto says in the Q&A.

2. Management must step up. The 20 to 40 claims reviewed under TPE "is a lot of ADRs to manage in a short span of time," says billing expert **M. Aaron Little** with **BKD** in Springfield, Missouri. "There is a lot at stake, so make sure the management team is monitoring for any written correspondence notifying them of TPE," he advises.

3. Keep staff alert to TPE duties. Billing personnel should be "tuned in and know how to identify claims selected for ADRs," Little recommends. And prioritize making sure that "medical records/clinical personnel are prompt in compiling the documentation required for a timely ADR response."

4. Facilitate smooth submission of ADRs. Time is of the essence in submitting your documentation, since a high ADR nonresponse rate is a TPE topic that can put - or keep - you on the review list (see story above). "Take advantage of the MACs' electronic ADR submission," Little urges. "The general consensus seems to be that the most effective, direct method of responding is through the MACs' web portals": myCGS, Connex for **National Government Services**, and eServices for Palmetto GBA.

5. Dive into the TPE details. There's a lot to learn about the program that will be shutting some agencies' doors in the not-so-distant future. Find out as much as you can about how TPE works to avoid that fate.

For example: Just because you get offered one-on-one education, doesn't mean you will be going on to the next round of the program. "We will be providing education to any provider that has any denials. If you have 40 samples and one claim is denied, we will be reaching out to provide education about why that one claim was denied," Palmetto explains in

the Q&A. "But just because you had education given, does not mean that you will automatically progress to the next round. Our due diligence is to help you understand why that claim was denied and how to prevent that in future." Palmetto hasn't released figures on what denial rate will kick you up to the next round of TPE, but NGS has said it will use a 15 percent or higher benchmark.

6. Stay tuned. The TPE program is still evolving as it picks up steam. Stay alert to new details as they emerge from CMS and the MACs.

For example: Palmetto GBA is hosting a Feb. 1 "Medical Review Hot Topic Teleconference" about TPE for all provider types, the MAC says. In the hour-long call that begins at 10 a.m. EST, Palmetto medical review experts will "discuss and answer your questions concerning the TPE Process," the MAC says. You can call 1-877-789-3907 with confirmation code 1391798 to access the call, Palmetto says on its website.