

MDS Alert

Tips and Tricks: Tidy Your To-Do List to Round Out 2020

Cleaning off your desk is a good way to end this year and start 2021.

2020 has been a year for the record books - not that anyone wants to remember much of it. And even though 2021 is not, so far, looking much different, in terms of day-to-day life, it could still feel good to prepare and start the year with a clean desk.

Now's the perfect time to tidy up your to-do list, whether it's doing a quick self-audit on MDS assessments and submissions, checking over your facility's CASPAR reports, or setting goals for yourself for professional growth next year.

Consider Purchasing Updated Books

You know that ICD-10 codes were updated and went into effect Oct. 1, 2020, so if you haven't familiarized yourself with them already, your coding may not be accurate. (See the link at end of this article for purchasing the AAPC 2021 Official ICD-10-CM Expert for Providers and Facilities.)

Simply having the new book in hand isn't enough - you must understand any updates before you need to incorporate the changes into your work. Make sure you dedicate an hour or so to going through the book, too.



Complete Some Online Tasks

If you have any subscriptions to online reference materials or memberships to professional organizations, check now to make sure you're up to date with orders or dues. If you need to renew later in the year, make sure you have money budgeted and reminders on your calendar so you're all set when the time comes.

If you haven't already taken advantage of a less formal but still incredibly helpful resource, do so now: Join a social media group, says **Terry Fletcher, BS, CPC, CCC, CEMC, CCS, CCS-P, CMC, CMCS, CMCS, ACS-CA, SCP-CA**, owner of Terry Fletcher Consulting Inc. and consultant, auditor, educator, author, and podcaster at Code Cast, in Laguna Niguel, California.

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and even Instagram have MDS-focused groups or communities where other professionals ask questions, provide answers, and share the sort of inside-joke memes that may bring you peace and solidarity, even if most of the folks in your regular social circle wouldn't understand.

While social media can be a useful addition to your network and workflow, don't let it become a distraction. Set aside a dedicated time each day to check your accounts, but don't give in to the endless scrolling that most platforms are designed to encourage.

Double-Check Agency Timelines and Requirements

You don't want to let any important deadlines or start times slip by, especially those dictated by federal or state agencies that affect compliance or reimbursement or resident health. Know your responsibilities for submitting different reports, data, or documentation, and make sure pertinent dates are on your calendar - with reminder notifications, if you use a

computer-based calendar!



For example, for Payroll Based Journal data, the most recent staffing data, from July 1 through Sept. 30 was due Nov. 14. The next deadline is Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2021, and covers data from Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, 2020.

Another important point: Keep track of the quality measures (QM) in play in 2020 and beyond. For example, "Changes in Skin Integrity Post-Acute Care: Pressure Ulcer/ Injury" (CMS ID: S038.02) is now on the Compare website, as of October 2020, replacing "Percent of Residents or Patients with Pressure Ulcers That Are New or Worsened (Short Stay)" (CMS ID: S002.02).

Linda Elizaitis, RN, RAC-CT, BS, president and founder of CMS Compliance Group in Melville, New York, notes that CMS says it isn't using any QM data from MDS-based data or claims-based data after Dec. 31, 2019, for Nursing Home Compare or in the QM Rating, and will let providers know when it plans to update Nursing Home Compare.

Take Care of Yourself

Heading into a long, dark winter after a long, rough year is daunting, so don't wait until Jan. 1 to prioritize some self-care and habits that promote well-being.

Clean your desk, Fletcher recommends. Remove the clutter of past publications, mail, and random pens, pencils, or scrap paper. In fact, remove as much as possible from your desk and wipe it down before organizing and returning only the usable or timely necessities.

The holiday season can be tough on the budget, but if there's any wiggle room, choose some small purchases wisely, like on handwritten snail mail, Fletcher says. Sending out snail mail holiday cards or thank you notes bring the recipient joy.

Don't wait until you start making your New Year's resolutions to make changes to your daily routine, if you feel like you could use some updates, too. Consider making 10 minutes of stretching or a brisk walk part of your routine, either before or after work or when you need a quick break.

Resource: Buy the 2021 AAPC ICD-10-CM code book at www.aapc.com/medical-coding-books/icd-10-cm-book/2021.