

OASIS Alert

Reader Question: Follow This Plan For Dating Your POC

Locator 25 is your saving grace when physicians forget to add a date.

Question: Often, our physicians are in such a rush when they complete and sign the Plan Of Care (POC) that they forget to add the date. Can our clinicians date the POC or must we track down the physician each time the date is missing?

Answer: Yes, you can complete and submit the POC even when physicians forget to date the form -- thanks to Locator 25, which you'll find just above the physician's certification statement on the POC, says **Karen Vance**, a consultant with **BKD** in Springfield, Mo. "The agency can stamp or enter the date they receive the POC in Locator 25, she tells **Eli**.

Unfortunately, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** has no formal guidance for completing the POC, and the Benefit Policy Manual says only that the POC must be signed and dated by a physician -- without any description of how to use Locator 25 when the physician forgets. Therefore, many agencies aren't aware that Locator 25 should be their fallback for completing the form, Vance laments.

Bottom line: You can't submit the POC for reimbursement without a date, but "if home health agencies couldn't bill without a date provided by the physician, they would all go broke," Vance says. CMS knew agencies would have this problem, so it provided Locator 25 to keep agencies from losing out on valuable reimbursement, she adds.