

OASIS Alert

Reader Question :HOW TO BENCHMARK CASE MIX TRENDS

Be sure you understand who you are using as a comparison.

Question: How do we go about finding case mix trends against which to benchmark our data? How do we compare our numbers to national standards?

Answer: The numbers you compare your data to can vary and there are pros and cons to each, says **Karen Vance**, supervising consultant for Springfield, Mo.-based **BKD**.

For example, you can use a vendor's product, that collects benchmarking data from the agencies that use their services.

Pro: Vendors can "slice those numbers any way they want and in whatever time frame they want," Vance explains. So you can have lots of ways to look at the data for comparisons.

Con: Their benchmark data is limited to the universe of agencies that buy that vendor's product. These agencies may or may not be similar to your agency.

CMS Provides Case Mix Data Too

Or you can benchmark using the national database repository that comes from cost reports directly from the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**, as her company does, Vance says.

These benchmark numbers are the estimated average casemix weight for their whole represented year.

Pro: The upside is that it is a solid number and can be sorted by state.

Con: The drawback is that the data usually lags by a year, and the numbers can't be sliced as many ways.

Your own numbers come from either your software or manually collected data. You can put your data in an Excel spreadsheet. This allows you to track your average case mix weight within your own agency between time periods as well as against a national number, Vance says.

Hidden benefit: This kind of spreadsheet also allows you to sort by staff member, Vance notes. If you see a trend of someone falling way outside the agency averages, you can investigate the reason. There may be no problem, but it could also indicate where you need to target clinician education.

Note: For a sample benchmarking report from BKD, emailM. Aaron Little at mlittle@bkd.com.