

# Home Health Coding and OASIS Expert

## ICD-10: Smooth Out the Bumps in the Road to ICD-10 Success

### Communication between coders and clinicians helps pave the way.

You've been putting the ICD-10 code set to work for weeks now, but that doesn't mean the transition is complete. Some coders may still need assistance settling in to the new face of diagnosis coding. Consider these expert tips to keep your agency's path forward clear.

### Get an ICD-10 Expert to Explain New System

If you haven't already had an ICD-10 expert come in to talk with your coders about their questions, it's not too late. "This can help make sure employees see ICD-10 as a good thing," says **Alicia Scott, CPC, CPC-I, CRC**, trainer with **Certification Coaching Organization, LLC**, in Oceanville, N.J.

Once coders learn the new system, they will find that "ICD-10 is amazing, and even though there are going to be some bumps, coders are going to fall in love with it," Scott says.

**Rationale:** The guidelines in ICD-9 and ICD-10 are the same for the most part; ICD-10 is just far more specific. This specificity benefits coders and providers as well □ once they get past the learning curve.

"ICD-9 is like learning to drive your grandfather's old five-speed pickup truck on the farm, and ICD-10 is like driving a Cadillac. The guesswork is gone; it is all spelled out for you now," Scott says.

The rub, however, is getting everyone the supplies and training they need to deal with the first year of ICD-10.

### Deliver Paper Copies for Coders

The cause for much ICD-10 anxiety, in many cases, is a lack of a paper copy of the ICD-10 manual. Scott recommends purchasing ICD-10 books for the entire coding staff.

"Each of your coders needs an ICD-10 manual to hold onto and make notes," Scott says.

Further, looking at a paper copy can help alleviate some of the ICD-10 fears, she says. When coders look at the paper copy of ICD-10, they often discover "that codes are found in the ICD-10 manual in the same areas [as the ICD-9 manual]. The chapters didn't change locations."

**Bottom line:** Once coders get a look at a paper manual, "they will see the benefits" of ICD-10, Scott explains.

### Promote Communication with Weekly Practice Sessions

Every ICD-10 coding expert will tell you that communication between your coders and clinical staff is vital for success with the new system.

**Try this:** Create an ICD-10 coding practice session, "have weekly meetings and go over unique cases with explicit rationales," Scott recommends. This will give both coders and clinicians a forum to ask questions and form opinions about important ICD-10 issues without interruptions.

If clinicians and coders don't communicate, you are bound to have difficulties with ICD-10. If you can't arrange weekly ICD-10 sessions, do your best to establish some kind of regular meeting to go over any ICD-10 issues.

### **Stoke ICD-10 Interest with Dx Coding 'Games'**

Another way to foster communication between coders and clinicians is to try and inject a little levity into ongoing ICD-10 training.

Do anything you can to promote a positive attitude around ICD-10, Scott recommends. "Have fun with it. Have a 'Crazy ICD-10 code of the week'" or some other entertaining activity.

Other ideas for ICD-10 training activities include:

- ICD-10 "Jeopardy": Stage a "Jeopardy"-style game show that tests ICD-10 coding knowledge. The winner gets a small prize.
- Group Coding: Split up into teams and work on providing ICD-10 codes based on mock scenarios. The team that gets the most ICD-10 codes right wins a small prize.
- Crosswalk Challenge: Give everyone a list of ICD-9 codes and descriptors, and instruct them to convert the codes to an appropriate ICD-10 code using a crosswalk. Give the employee who gets the most codes correct a small prize.