



Performance Standards for Coding Professionals

by Rose Dunn, CPA, RRA

Special to For the Record

Coding professionals hold a unique position in health information management and institutional fiscal solvency. The focus on their performance includes simultaneous scrutiny by some external agencies to enhance the codes assigned and by others questioning excessive coding. Even though more new professionals are completing academic and certification-training programs, the pressure on their performance is not lessening. Directors of medical record departments and coding supervisors seek a measure of assessing coding staff performance.

The results of a recent survey (conducted by Rose Dunn, First Class Solutions, Missouri, and Barbara Bigelow, Fairbanks Memorial, Alaska) of medical record professionals nationwide were used to compile this suggested set of coding standards and position description. All facilities have their own unique characteristics and demands. This suggested position description and its expectations should be adjusted to respond to your facility's requirements.

Suggested Position Description and Expectations

Primary Function

Abstracts clinical information from medical records. Assigns appropriate ICD-9-CM and CPT-4 codes and confirms appropriate DRG assignment.

Duties and Responsibilities

Abstracts relevant clinical and demographic information from the medical record. Assigns ICD-9-CM and CPT-4 codes in accordance with coding and reimbursement guidelines. With minimal error, identifies principal and secondary diagnoses

and procedures based upon UHDDS standards.

- Maintains a minimum accuracy rate consistent with HCFA regulations and internal reimbursement expectations.

- Maintains DRG and coding accuracy rate of not less than 97 percent based on internal and external QA reviews.

- Identifies and codes principal diagnosis and procedures using ICD-9-CM or CPT-4 with minimal errors with fifth digit, conventions.

- Identifies and codes secondary diagnoses and procedures using ICD-9-CM or CPT-4 with minimal errors (i.e., fifth digit, sequencing, conventions).

- Codes average work units per day commensurate with placement in career ladder.

Coding Specialist:

- >32 Inpatient records, regardless of patient type

- 2 minutes/chart outpatient and ER records

- 4 minutes/chart ambulatory surgery records

Coder II:

- >23 Inpatient records, regardless of patient type

- 3 minutes/chart outpatient and ER records

- 6 minutes/chart ambulatory surgery records

Coder I:

- >15 Inpatient records, regardless of patient type

- 4 minutes/chart outpatient and ER records

- 8 minutes/chart ambulatory surgery records

- Interfiles various medical reports including, but not limited to, dictated reports, lab reports, and X-ray interpretations into patient health records.

- Retrieves and refiles health records for the day being coded.

- Refers coding and system questions to the coding supervisor in a timely manner for determination and guideline development. Seeks assistance only after exhausting own resources.

- Assists the physician in completion of attestation statement including answering questions, clarifying coding versus clinical issues. Is pleasant in dealing with others.

- Assists business office in clarification of coding versus reimbursement issues.

- Assists other coders in performance of duties including answering questions and providing guidance to entry-level coding personnel.

- Receives more than four complaints during rating period from physicians or staff members of rudeness to physician or staff members.

- Participates in coding meetings and educational conferences in order to maintain coding accuracy. Credentialed personnel are responsible for maintaining and tracking continuing-education requirements.

- Communicates appropriate information to co-workers and supervisor in timely and accurate manner. Communicates in a non-disruptive manner.

- Completes assigned tasks in time frame appropriate for situation. Able to adjust to increased workload.

- Safeguards the privacy of the med-



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ical information in the record. Does not discuss medical information contained in the record with unauthorized personnel. One-hundred percent compliance is required. Absolute standard.

■ Performs other related duties as assigned.

Internal/External Contacts

■ Internal: Physicians, medical record personnel, business office, staff, CFO, other health care personnel

■ External: PRO, insurance auditors, external QA auditing firms, contract coders

Educational Requirements and Registration or Certification

■ ART or RRA preferred. If not credentialed, incumbent must have working knowledge of the ICD-9-CM coding systems, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology.

Experience Requirements

■ Coding Specialist: Minimum of three years acute-inpatient-care coding experience.

■ Coder II: Minimum of one year acute inpatient and outpatient coding experience.

■ Coder I: No experience.

Working Conditions

■ Office environment. Requires long periods of visually examining documents.

[See "Tricks of the Trade" in next week's issue of FOR THE RECORD for suggested performance evaluation criteria for coders.]

Rose T. Dunn, RRA, CPA, is a managing partner of First Class Solutions, a computer and health-care consulting company in St. Louis, MO. She served on the AMRA Board of Directors from 1987 to 1990 and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Dunn is currently a candidate for president elect of AMRA.

Itinerary

Itinerary listings are offered free to local, state, and national associations. Facility workshops, seminars, and courses with nominal fees are also listed without charge. Call (215) 935-1296, FAX (215) 935-3072, or write with your listing by the Monday before publication.

Dover, DE

Delaware MRA Quarterly Meeting

September 18, 1991

The Delaware Medical Record Association will hold its quarterly meeting Sept. 18 at the Sheraton Inn in Dover. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the program will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information contact Colleen Burth-Duling at (302) 651-4460.

Charlestown, RI

Rhode Island MRA Fall Meeting

September 19, 1991

The Rhode Island Medical Record Association will hold its fall meeting Sept. 19 at The General Stanton Inn in Charlestown. Jennifer Cofer, RRA, will discuss current AMRA issues, and the AMRA seminar, "Discovering the Future: The Business of Paradigms," will be presented. Four CE credits are available, and the \$17 registration fee includes dinner. The registration deadline is Sept. 12. For more information contact Marlene Haglund, RRA, at (401) 884-1641.

Richmond, KY

Kentucky MRA Fall Meeting

September 19-20, 1991

The Kentucky Medical Record Association will hold its fall meeting Sept. 19 and 20 at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. The two-day registration fees are \$60 for KMRA members and \$70 for non-members. One-day registration fees are \$45 for members and \$55 for non-members. The program has been approved for nine CEUs. For more information contact Wanda Perkins at (606) 784-6661, ext. 364 or Karen Sansom at (502) 745-3815.

Tulsa, OK

Oklahoma MRA Annual Meeting

September 19-20, 1991

The Oklahoma Medical Record Association will hold its annual meeting Sept. 19 and 20 at the Marriott Hotel in Tulsa. The registration fees are \$105 for OMRA members and \$125 for non-members. Single-day registration fees are also available. For more information contact Lisa Neighbors at (918) 684-2472.

Manhattan, KS

Kansas MRA Annual Meeting

September 19-20, 1991

The Kansas Medical Record Association will

hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the Kansas Hospital Association Sept. 19 through 20 at the Holiday Inn Holiday in Manhattan. For more information contact the Kansas Hospital Association at (913) 233-7436.

North Platte, NE

Nebraska MRA Annual Meeting

September 19-20, 1991

The Nebraska Medical Record Association will hold its annual meeting Sept. 19 and 20 at the Holiday Inn in North Platte. Registration fees are \$65 for both days and \$55 per day for members. Non-member fees are \$10 more. Student fees are \$20. For more information contact Pat Barrett at (308) 235-3621.

New Orleans, LA

Greater New Orleans MRA Seminar

September 20, 1991

The Greater New Orleans Medical Record Association will sponsor a seminar on "Environmental Health Issues" on Sept. 20 in New Orleans. The program is approved for one CE hour. For more information on location and registration contact John H. Massarini, ART, at (504) 837-0012 after 5 p.m.

Harrisburg, PA

Central Pennsylvania MRA Annual Meeting

September 20, 1991

The Central Pennsylvania Medical Record Association will hold its annual meeting Sept. 20 at the Harrisburg Hospital in Harrisburg. The meeting will focus on total quality management. The early registration is \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members and walk-ins. The program is free for students. The program is approved for five CE credits. For more information contact Pamela Ness at (717) 843-8623 ext. 571.

Orlando, FL

Florida MRA MRT/MRA Review Session

September 20-21, 1991

The Florida Medical Record Association will host an MRT/MRA review workshop Sept. 20 and 21 at the Marriott Hotel and Resort in Orlando. The registration fee, including handouts and breaks, is \$50. For more information contact Jeanne Jackson, ART, (407) 282-2635.

Orono, ME

Maine MRA Fall Meeting

September 24, 1991

The Maine Medical Record Association will host its annual fall meeting Sept. 24 at the Black Bear Inn and Convention Center in Orono. Registration packets will be forthcoming. To register or for more information contact Nancy Tracy at

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Go against the grain. Cut down on salt.

Adding salt to your food could subtract years from your life. Because in some people salt contributes to high blood pressure, a condition that increases your risk of heart disease.

