

QUALITY AND COMPENSATION

Quality audits are required to ensure healthcare documentation integrity. Thus, it is important to have a well-defined, transparent, documented quality process within any organization. Many healthcare organizations and MTSOs tie quality to their compensation model. To decide what is best for your organization, give due consideration to points listed below.

Quality Best Practices should be in place first, before considering the impact to compensation

- Audits should be performed as an educational endeavor. It is important to provide appropriate feedback and followup, particularly when a healthcare documentation specialist has failed the quality standard set by the organization.
- QA staff should provide timely and proactive feedback to ensure continuous quality improvement.
- QA staff should be consistent in their feedback to staff and when differences among QA staff arise, management should review and make a determination on the appropriateness of how a particular issue is resolved. Transparency with staff being reviewed is extremely important.
- A formal dispute resolution process should be developed to ensure that staff feels they can bring an issue to the QA staff and feel that their opinion matters.
- Healthcare documentation specialists should feel comfortable when they proactively send a document for further review that they will receive feedback and follow-up to ensure the same issues do not happen in the future. Re-work costs money and should be avoided through a proactive quality program.
- Audits should be performed on a set percentage or number of lines or documents on a regular basis, according to your QA guidelines. This will ensure that reviews are fair and reflect the overall compendium of work performed by the healthcare documentation specialist who is being reviewed.
- Consideration should be given to dictating factors that can impact quality when performing the review:
 - Poor telephone connections
 - Speech impediments
 - Strong accents
 - Background noise
 - Poor dictation practices
 - Use of cell phones
- A variety of factors impact the individual healthcare documentation specialist's overall QA – technology, education, experience, and personal work habits. Consideration should be given to the need for additional training.
- Work distribution can impact QA in several ways. If the HDS is switching between multiple accounts and various text and EHR platforms, quality may be impacted. Individuals need time to learn accounts and feel comfortable with the associated technology.
- Failed QA reviews should result in corrective counseling.

Compensation Impact on QA: If deciding to tie QA and compensation, consider the following:

- If your organization decides that only a certain percentage of the total volume of work performed may be sent to QA, and deduct compensation for exceeding the percentage, how do you determine what that percentage should be? Data is important to collect and consider in determining what is acceptable for the type of work performed. One should include type of facility, acuity mix for the type of documents dictated, dictators for whom English is their second language, technology utilized and staff experience and training when determining an acceptable percentage.
- If the HDS exceeds your organizations standard percentage of work to be sent to QA, it is recommended that an interactive review process be in place to ensure consistency and accuracy of both the HDS and QA. Consider a corrective counseling process versus punitive compensation to address the issue of sending a large percentage of documents to QA for second review.
- Consider rewarding HDSs for outstanding QA reviews. This can be accomplished through an incentive or bonus system. If an incentive or bonus is not paid, recognition through the performance review process should be recognized and if appropriate should be rewarded through merit increase in an hourly salary system.
- Avoid using QA reviews to reduce compensation.