

Challenges of Clinical Documentation

Is your organization experiencing problems with clinical documentation?

Problem:

As a social service agency, you know how important it is to maintain documentation of service provision for regulatory and funding entities. That documentation includes:

- an assessment of an individual's need for service,
- a service or treatment plan,
- progress notes, and
- periodic reassessment of the person's progress.

If this isn't done or isn't done properly, then you risk losing your funding.

While YOU know how imperative this documentation is, staff members who have to actually do the documentation tend to view it as a task that takes time away from personal contact with their clients. They may even look at documentation as a cumbersome task that must be completed in order to keep one's job or be paid for one's services.

Some staff members may delay completing documentation, arguing that there just isn't time to get it done. Others create shortcuts, such as using the same treatment plan and vague progress note in multiple cases. When that happens, agencies may face regulatory or financial sanctions if they ever face a documentation audit.

Solution:

Create a shift in thinking.

People working in the field of social services, are, for the most part, trying hard to do their best to help their clientele have better, more satisfying lives. They are intelligent people, many of whom have significant educational credentials and years of experience.

Once these people can approach clinical documentation as a helpful tool that actually enhances their ability to help their clients, documentation problems tend to be resolved. Making this change in thinking involves some specific action on the part of the agency, including:

- Changing the message that documentation is a necessary evil. The agency should promote documentation as helpful tools that assist the staff person to help clients.

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- Making sure the training staff members receive is specific to the staff person's job, individualized to the extent possible, and includes many examples of clinical documentation that not only meets requirements but enhances the services provided to the client. Training is most effective when the trainer provides one-on-one coaching in the skills involved in clinical documentation.
- Giving individual feedback to staff, specifically addressing improvement in the staff person's work and including information about and examples of how any problems with documentation could be improved.
- Addressing staff statements regarding inadequate time to complete documentation. Some options you can offer include time management skill development, scheduling specific time to complete documentation, or more specific supervision of completion of documentation.

Piurek & Associates can offer Alice Prather's expertise to assist your organization in addressing the problem described in the above scenario. Please contact Piurek & Associates at [602-996-8800](tel:602-996-8800) if you are interested in learning more about the assistance Alice can provide to your organization.