



Texas' Regent Care Centers

Texas' Regent Care Centers Speeds Medicare Payment with ABILITY Now and ABILITY Choice Claims

Texas-based Regent Care Center, a cluster of 12 independently owned and operated skilled nursing facilities managed by Regent Management Services, has accelerated Medicare reimbursement, streamlined workflow, and enhanced claims error detection using ABILITY NOW.

Implemented in 2007, ABILITY NOW allows professionals to verify claims status and correct denied claims using ABILITY's high-speed secure network while still maintaining access to e-mail, printers and software programs. They are also able to automate the process of sending Medicare claims and receiving remittance advice on the server using ABILITY Choice Claims.

The result, according to Clara Rose Coble, Regional Business Consultant for six of the 12 Regent Care Centers, is dramatic—from enhanced speed, efficiency, productivity and claims error identification, to improved connectivity to multiple Medicare Administrative Contractors including Trailblazer, Palmetto GBA and Legacy Mutual of Omaha.

Opportunity

Ranging in size from 128 to 194 beds, Regent Care Centers serve a mix of Medicare, Medicaid, managed care and private patients with skilled nursing and rehabilitation services. Although Regent operates at 85 to 95 percent occupancy, it now faces deep reimbursement cuts from state and federal agencies. In October 2010, Medicare announced cuts to skilled nursing facilities; and February 2011, the state of Texas declared reimbursement reductions of two percent with potential cuts of up to 10 percent still on the table.

“Reimbursement reductions in that range could drive a number of skilled nursing facilities in Texas and across the nation out of business,” says Coble. “It’s difficult to understand how we could still provide the same level of high-quality care to our patients in light of such severe cuts.” Fortunately, Regent sees ABILITY NOW solutions as an antidote to widespread reimbursement cuts.

Prior to ABILITY Choice Claims implementation, Regent submitted Medicare claims using an archaic dial-up connection. The equipment would dial repeatedly—sometimes for three to four minutes. Connections were dropped and transmissions of 60 to 80 batched claims looked like they had been completed but sometimes failed. Additionally, professionals couldn’t check claims until the following day. The result: lost time, worker angst and delayed reimbursement.

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Regent business consultant

Implementation

Regent found a remedy for its troubles at a seminar conducted by a Medicare consultant, where attendees lauded ABILITY for its speed, reliance and ease-of-use.

After Coble conferred with Regent’s chief financial officer and chief information officer the company decided to go with ABILITY NOW.

“Thanks to the involvement of IT, Regent business offices were spared from having to spend time on training and orientation to the new system,” says Coble.

Results

Regent is pleased with the results generated by ABILITY NOW solutions. Coble points to timely transmissions, rapid follow-up, receipt of response files to confirm transmissions, and reduced loss of claims. She estimates that claims are transmitted by Regent and retrieved by Medicare in an hour or less thanks to the ABILITY NOW server's capability to sweep a claims outbox and transmit claims automatically.

"Less professional stress and frustration and more rapid receipt of cash have been ABILITY's gifts to Regent," says Coble. "The quicker the claims go out, the quicker the cash comes in, which means Regent can continue to deliver high-quality, safe efficient skilled nursing care to patients and families in a challenging market."

While some skilled nursing facilities have days outstanding of 45 to 50 days, the ideal days outstanding is 30 days. Regent ended 2010 at 27-28 days with a Medicare census average of 18 per day.

Professionals have also come out winners. They can easily navigate between the DDE system and Regent's software system, enhancing productivity and efficiency. Previously, they were forced to open the DDE screen, write down information, and close it out down before they opened Regent's healthcare software, hit print, closed it down and returned to DDE.

Lessons Learned

Coble offers these suggestions to skilled nursing facilities interested in accelerating reimbursement and streamlining workflow:

- Keep up with current technology. "Because we retained a dial-up connection for an extended period of time, we experienced unneeded stress and frustration," says Coble.
- Communicate regularly with the IT group on issues such as software updates, passwords, new equipment and personnel, expectations and problems.
- Use referrals to learn about other options available.
- Ask for input from professionals who submit claims.



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About ABILITY

ABILITY works to save lives by facilitating information exchange and knowledge sharing among every participant within the healthcare spectrum – hospitals, physician practices, home care providers, DMEs, and private and government payers. More than 3,000 hospitals across the country use ABILITY network to promote care coordination and collaboration, reduce record fragmentation, participate in new care models, streamline administrative workflow and access the Direct Project network and state and community-based Health Information Exchanges.