
Program Memorandum Intermediaries/Carriers

Department of Health &
Human Services (DHHS)
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services (CMS)

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CHANGE REQUEST 2113

SUBJECT: Customer Service Representative (CSR) Response to Physician and Provider Correct Coding Initiative (CCI) Questions

This Program Memorandum (PM) communicates the policy that Medicare provider customer service representatives (CSRs) should follow when they are called upon to answer claims coding questions concerning HCPCS coding or the correct coding initiative.

Medicare provider CSRs are responsible to provide accurate and complete information and truly want to give answers to customer questions. However, supplying the right Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes and CCI modifiers for specific claims is beyond the scope of their work. The Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System contains more than 12,000 codes, 7,000 of which describe physician procedures from all specialties and require specialized training to be able to describe. In contrast, the average individual practitioner only uses 150-300 of these codes to describe his/her services. Therefore, it is Medicare's expectation that the responsibility to supply the correct code on the Medicare claim lies with the practitioner or the provider. Medicare contractors are responsible for providing HCPCS training to Medicare providers as described in the Medicare Carriers Manual (MCM), Part 3, §4552 and the Medicare Intermediary Manual (MIM), Part 3, §3627.7.

Two questions that physicians and providers frequently ask CSR's are:

1. Can you give me the correct code, or confirm if this is the correct code, to use for this claim?
2. Can you tell me the correct CCI modifier, or confirm if this is the correct CCI modifier, for this claim?

The correct answers to these questions are:

1. Regarding coding: "I am unable to answer coding questions related to a specific claim. Specific beneficiary circumstances, time spent with the patient, and other factors can influence which code is appropriate to describe your service or procedure. Let me help you get information about coding and definitions associated with the procedure you are asking about."
2. Regarding CCI modifiers: "I am unable to answer specific coding or CCI modifier questions for your claims, but I can help explain CCI modifier definitions."

After responding that CSRs are **unable** to supply codes or modifiers for claims, CSRs may offer the following:

- Give the definitions or explain the use of the CCI modifiers. [Note: To give CSRs the necessary information on CCI concepts and modifiers, a **Correct Coding Initiative Reference Guide for CSRs was forwarded to all provider call centers** and will soon be available on the MedLearn Web site, a **CCI presentation is now available on the MedLearn Web site**, and National training on CCI concepts for CSRs **was aired on April 23, 2002, and was rebroadcast on May 14, 2002**, via the CMS' Satellite Learning Channel.]

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- Refer callers who believe that a CCI edit is incorrect to their national, local, or specialty medical societies as the preferred sources for assistance. Medical societies may be able to explain the rationale for the edit or help effect a review of the edit.
- Refer providers with HCPCS coding questions to the professional relations representative designated by the contractor in accord with MCM §4551 and MIM §3627.9. In addition, at the discretion of the contractor and according to the availability of coding skills, refer callers to the most appropriate source from a range of sources, for example: the AMA for CPT coding questions, their Carrier Medical Director for help with HCPCS coding questions or CCI modifiers, provider relations representative, state or specialty medical society, etc.
- DMERC CSRs should refer coding questions to the SADMERC helpline at 1-877-735-1326.
- Advise callers that they may ask for a review of the edit by contacting AdminaStar Federal. The providers should write directly to AdminaStar at:

The National Correct Coding Initiative
AdminaStar Federal, Inc.
P.O. Box 50469
Indianapolis, IN 46250-0469

Fax: (317)–841-4600

NOTE: The processing time for requests to AdminaStar Federal is about 4 weeks.

- The CCI Edits Manual is available from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) Web site at <http://www.ntis.gov/help/subscriptions.asp?loc=7-8-0>, or by contacting NTIS at 1-800-363-2068 or 703-605-6060.
- CMS' Frequently Asked Questions Online: www.hcfa.gov/medlearn/ncci.htm.

The effective date of this PM is June 6, 2002.

The implementation date for this PM is June 6, 2002.

These instructions should be completed within your current operating budget.

This PM may be discarded June 30, 2004.

If you have any questions, contact Judy Hunt at 410-786-7874.