AHIMA's Long-Term Care Health Information Practice and Documentation Guidelines

Introduction

Purpose And Use of These Guidelines

The long term care (LTC) community requires complete and accurate clinical records and documentation. Documentation-based survey initiatives, quality indicators, quality measures, corporate compliance, reimbursement changes and litigation have all had an impact on the industry and the need for properly maintained clinical record systems. The LTC Health Information Practice and Documentation Guidelines were developed to provide a resource to health information professionals and healthcare organizations on the role of the health information practitioners, practice guidelines for establishing and maintaining health information systems, and documentation guidelines specific to long term care.

Federal regulations for nursing facilities and skilled nursing facilities require organizations to maintain their clinical records in accordance with accepted professional standards and practices and to employ or contract with professionals necessary to carry out the regulations.

Just as the LTC industry has seen changes, it is anticipated that these practice guidelines will also be reviewed, revised and updated to adapt to future changes in practice, systems, and regulations.

Note: These guidelines were developed to address federal regulations for LTC facilities. State regulations should be followed if they differ from the practice guidelines.

Transition From Medical Records To Health Information Management (HIM)

The terms health information and health information management are used throughout this document to represent the medical record and medical record department. In the early 1990's the American Medical Record Association changed its name to the American Health Information Management Association to better reflect the role the medical record professional. The new terminology recognized the maintenance of clinical information in a variety of formats and the evolution of the role of a medical record director to one whose role is to manage health information beyond the medical record.

Definition of Long Term Care Facility

The term long term care (LTC) facility is used throughout the guidelines to represent nursing facilities and skilled nursing facilities. The term resident was used rather than patient to

provide consistency with the term used in the federal requirements for long term care facilities.

Acknowledgements

Copyright And Use Of Report

These guidelines were developed and made available free of charge via the Internet and AHIMA's website for use by health care provider organizations and health information management professionals to provide assistance and direction in developing and maintaining health information systems that meet professional practice standards. The guidelines, samples, and examples can be used in development of facility/organization systems, policies and procedures without obtaining special copyright permission.

Reference to HIM Practice Standards

In section four of this report (Practice Guidelines for LTC Health Information and Record Systems) there are HIM Standards in a box which relate to the section topic. These standards were obtained from the book Health Information Management Practice Standards: Tools for Assessing Your Organization published by AHIMA in 1998. Not all HIM standards published in this book were referenced in this report -- only those relevant to LTC.

Example:

Assigning a Medical Record Number

> **HIM STANDARD:**
> The healthcare organization has a policy that requires a separate, unique health record for each resident.

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