Hospice Audit Basics: Staff Education Handout

Hospices are subject to various types of CMS audits designed to ensure compliance, proper billing, and accurate documentation of patient eligibility. This handout provides staff with an overview of common audit types and best practices to remain audit-ready.

Types of Hospice Audits

- TPE (Targeted Probe and Educate): Focuses on specific claims; up to 3 rounds with education between each.
- RAC (Recovery Audit Contractor): Identifies improper payments and can extrapolate results across many claims.
- UPIC (Unified Program Integrity Contractor): Investigates fraud, abuse, and overpayments.
- SMRC (Supplemental Medical Review Contractor): Performs reviews on specific CMS projects or issues.

Key Documentation Auditors Look For

- Signed hospice election statement
- Certification and recertification of terminal illness
- Face-to-face encounter documentation (when required)
- Interdisciplinary Group (IDG) meeting notes
- Plan of Care and updates
- Comparative documentation showing decline
- Visit notes from all disciplines (nursing, social work, chaplain, aide)

Staff Responsibilities During Audits

- Document clearly and consistently at every visit.
- Avoid vague terms like 'stable'—instead describe measurable changes.
- Ensure timely signatures on certifications and visit notes.
- Report changes in patient condition promptly to the IDG.
- Participate in mock audits and training sessions to strengthen documentation skills.

Remember: Audits are not just about billing—they are about proving that hospice patients meet eligibility criteria and are receiving appropriate care. Strong, defensible documentation is the best protection against denials.

Hospice Audit Basics – Staff Quiz

Complete this short quiz to check your understanding of hospice audit basics.

1. What is the purpose of a CMS hospice audit?

2. Name two common types of hospice audits.

3. What key documentation do auditors always review?

4. Why is comparative documentation important?

5. What should staff avoid writing in visit notes?

6. What is the deadline for responding to an ADR?

Hospice Audit Basics – Answer Key

- 1. The purpose of a CMS hospice audit is to ensure compliance, proper billing, and that patient eligibility is supported by documentation.

- 2. Common types include: TPE (Targeted Probe & Educate), RAC (Recovery Audit Contractor), UPIC (Unified Program Integrity Contractor), SMRC (Supplemental Medical Review Contractor).

- 3. Auditors always review: certifications/recertifications, face-to-face documentation, IDG notes, Plan of Care, comparative documentation of decline, and visit notes.

- 4. Comparative documentation is important because it demonstrates measurable decline over time, which supports ongoing hospice eligibility.

- 5. Staff should avoid vague terms like 'stable' or 'no change' and instead describe specific, measurable changes in condition.

- 6. Hospices have 45 calendar days to respond to an ADR (Additional Documentation Request).