

Credentialing - A Road to Success

By Gisela Mejia
*Director
Northwest Credentials
Verification Service (NCVS)*



Credentialing is a multi-step process that protects the public from providers who lack proper qualifications, health care organizations from liability of using under qualified providers, and providers from unfair or arbitrary practice limits, which helps maintain their general reputation and respect.

Few could argue the need to credential. It is an important tool for meeting the standards of various organizations that regulate the health care industry, including the Joint Commission, NCQA, URAC, and AAAHC. However, the time, effort, and cost to perform the credentialing process are high, which

can place a large administrative burden on all parties involved.

The credentialing process begins when a provider completes a professional history application. Specific elements are verified from primary sources, such as specialty boards, professional references, medical/professional schools, and graduate medical education training programs. The provider's affiliations with hospitals and surgery centers are also verified. A query to the National Practitioner Data Bank is made. In addition, many organizations perform criminal background checks. From this process Medicare/Medicaid sanctions, state license disciplinary actions, and malpractice claims are revealed, if any exist.

The verified credentials information is reviewed and compared to the organization's credentials criteria, their credentialing body decides if the provider meets all requirements previously established by the organization, and approves the provider for participation.

This process can take up to several months and creates much duplication along the way. The process is repeated as the provider applies at each organization. The same verifications are performed repeatedly, burdening not only organizations with tedious work, but also burdening the verification sources as

the same types of requests are repeated.

Over the last few years various tools have been implemented to alleviate the burden placed on all parties. One of them is the use of a standard credentialing application. In the early days of the credentialing movement, each health care organization had its own application form that the provider was required to use. Several years ago, the Washington Credentialing Standardization Group was formed by professionals working in credentialing and medical offices. This group created the Washington Practitioner Application, a standardized credentials application that is now widely used throughout the state. This effort has greatly contributed to lowering duplication for the providers.

A logical step for many organizations is the outsourcing of part of the credentialing process to a Credentials Verification Organization (CVO). A CVO gathers all the various primary source data required by the organizations and maintains the information in its database. This database may then be used by multiple organizations as a credentials source for information on a particular health care provider. All information is held in strict confidence and is only released to organizations after obtaining the

provider's permission. By centralizing the primary source gathering to a single organization, redundant work is eliminated and the need for verification sources to fill out endless forms and requests is reduced. Northwest Credentials Verification Service (NCVS), a national CVO based in Bremerton, WA, has verified the credentials of thousands of health care providers on behalf of a large variety of health care organizations. Using

a CVO, such as NCVS makes the credentialing process easier and far less time consuming.

As we move further into streamlining the credentialing process, it is imperative for all parties involved to keep an open mind to change and to assist with the combined effort for successful implementation of higher efficiencies and lowering of administrative costs.

Gisela Mejia is a Director with

Northwest Credentials Verification Service (NCVS). Established in 1995, NCVS was awarded certification by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in 1996 and during all subsequent surveys. During its 2007 survey, NCQA awarded NCVS again with 10 out of 10 verification services. The NCQA certification relieves NCVS clients of any required oversight. Ms. Mejia can be reached at 360-415-6508.

10 of 10

Accuracy is key when verifying the credentials of your practitioners. NCVS received NCQA certification for 10 out of 10 verification services by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). Trust the NCVS team with all of your verification needs. Call **360-415-6508** today and let us show you how.



**Northwest Credentials
Verification Service**

www.ncvsonline.com

