



Medical Transcription Industry Association (MTIA)
Statement on
Credentialing for Healthcare Documentation Workers

Position

MTIA believes healthcare documentation workers (i.e., medical transcriptionists, transcription editors, speech recognition editors, and quality assurance coordinators) play a critical, interpretive role in accurately and securely capturing patient care encounter information – information upon which further care decisions are made, reimbursement processes are determined, and risk management programs are dependent. For that reason, **MTIA strongly supports the development of a credentialed workforce**, whose entry-to-practice and level II benchmark skills can help transcription service organizations (a) deliver high-quality data capture and documentation to end-user clients and providers, (b) embrace a service value proposition based on quality, and (c) educate end-user clients about the need for a skilled, interpretive knowledge worker in the evolving clinical documentation domain, particularly in the face of growing documentation complexity and emerging technologies that might suggest human judgment is not required for accurate health data capture and documentation.

Rationale

Where benchmark testing and credentialing of our workforce is concerned, consideration must be given to the role and impact of those documentation workers on key areas that relate to the health record – those which are (or should be) of primary concern to transcription service organizations as well as the clients, providers, and patients they serve:

- *Health Record Security:* Healthcare documentation specialists represent an access point to the patient record, and while the access itself can be tracked and audited, it is the ability of those workers to modify and alter the patient record that should be of critical concern. A great degree of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the documentation team (MT, editor, QA coordinator, etc.) to ensure that what is captured is an accurate reflection of (a) what is dictated *or* (b) what is *intended*, where discrepancy exists in what is dictated. Even in a verbatim environment, accurate capture still relies on the ability of the MT or editor to *interpret* the dictation correctly. Safeguarding patient records does not just involve protecting the access points. It should likewise involve protecting patient record outcomes by ensuring that only skilled, qualified, and *accountable* individuals have access to patient records for the purpose of creating, modifying, and formatting the health record.



- *Fiscal Impact:* Organizations must consider the cost associated with records that are suspended in QA and error analysis due to the marginal skill set of an MT or editor that has had inadequate training and lacks the professional credential that would have required benchmark skills. While great attention is often paid to how long dictated reports sit on the dictation system before they are transcribed, the delay between transcription and the release of that document for continuity of care and reimbursement represents a tangible cost to both the transcription service organization and the client. Medical transcriptionists cannot bring an interpretive skill set to an organization without a significant foundation of knowledge and training. The pace at which healthcare delivery is moving no longer affords service organizations the luxury of taking a chance on an MT from a substandard educational program or one whose skills and proficiencies, no matter what is reflected on a resume or application, are questionable.
- *Industry Impact:* It is MTIA's belief that when substandard services are rendered by unqualified documentation workers, particularly those who are delivering services on behalf of an MTSO, this has the potential to negatively impact the perception of our clients and providers about the quality and value of outsourced services in general. While the Association believes there should be a preserved space in the market for transcription service organizations to competitively differentiate their services, supporting standards of practice and professional credentials that ensure a high-quality workforce should be the unified goal of *all* service organizations.

Recommendation

Given the above considerations, MTIA urges transcription service organizations to adopt the following recommended business practices that will begin to transition our sector toward the goal of engaging a fully credentialed workforce:

1. In employment advertising and promotional materials seeking level I (entry level) and/or specialty transcriptionists, transcription service organizations should adopt the practice of including the terms *RMT credential required* (where possible) or *RMT credential preferred* (where necessary).
2. In employment advertising and promotional materials seeking level II (acute care) transcriptionists and editors, transcription service organizations should adopt the practice of including the terms *CMT*



credential required (where possible) or *CMT credential preferred* (where necessary).

3. In employment advertising and promotional materials seeking quality assurance coordinators, transcription service organizations should adopt the practice of including the terms *CMT credential required*.
4. Consider a plan for transitioning your current workforce to a credentialed status - one that provides ample time and a supportive environment for the preparation required of your employees to comply with that plan.

Application

The long-term goal of transitioning our workforce toward required professional credentials must first begin with policies that demonstrate a preference for documentation workers who have made the demonstrable commitment to professional development, and the recommendations above represent that first critical step.

MTIA acknowledges that there is a measurable cost associated with preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining the professional credentials referenced here. It is important to note that the Association is *not* including in this recommendation the mandate or suggestion that the responsibility for those costs be shouldered, at all or in part, by the transcription service organization/employer. MTIA believes that healthcare documentation specialists should approach the profession and the industry with the same commitment to professional development and credentialing that characterizes all other allied health professions. Certainly some employers do and will choose to invest workforce development resources in employee credentialing, but healthcare documentation workers should neither expect nor assume this as standard practice, and employers who engage in preferential hiring practices for credentialed candidates or plan to transition a current workforce to a credentialed status are encouraged to do so even where they choose not to assist with those expenses.