

Risk Adjustment Coding Best Practices

Risk Adjustment is a statistical method for comparing populations by their health, expected use of healthcare services, and related costs. A risk-adjustable condition is a health condition, like diabetes or heart disease, that is used in a risk adjustment model to calculate a risk score.

Risk Adjustment relies on providers to maintain accurate medical records that capture a comprehensive health status and complete risk profile of their patients. Any risk-adjustable condition must be supported by the presence of clinical documentation and a treatment plan in the member's medical record. To ensure that accurate and complete diagnosis data is reported, provider documentation must be thorough and specific.

Here are some best practices:

- Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance) is required to adhere to the following data submission requirements:
 - Submit all required diagnosis codes for each beneficiary and submit unique diagnoses at least once during the risk adjustment data reporting period
 - The data reporting period is the 12 months before the payment year
 - Ensure the accuracy and integrity of risk adjustment data submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS)
 - Submit the required data elements from acceptable data sources according to the coding guidelines
 - Acceptable data sources are determined by CMS and include physician claims, hospital inpatient facilities, hospital outpatient facilities, and medical records
- How you can support accurate documentation and coding at the point of care:
 - Encourage each beneficiary to complete an Annual Wellness Visit
 - Use accurate International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) codes to document the patient's diagnosis with the highest level of specificity
 - Ensure clinical notes and test results contain accurate, complete, and current information
 - Only use the words “history of” or “resolved” to describe conditions that no longer exist
 - Include all documented diagnosis codes on the claim form(s) submitted
 - Submit an electronic medical record (EMR) supplemental data file that contains all active conditions to mitigate potential data loss from potential claims clearing claims truncation
 - For additional information regarding supplemental files, please send an inquiry to **DeptStarsTeam@alamedaalliance.org**
- Scheduling:
 - Educate and proactively schedule members for an Annual Wellness Visit

- Schedule a follow-up visit if all clinically relevant conditions are not diagnosed and documented in an appointment
- Consider longer or more frequent visits for high-acuity patients who require complex condition management
- Risk Adjustment documentation best practices:
 - Review and complete chart preparation prior to the member visit
 - Past visits
 - Labs
 - Medications
 - Update problem list during visit:
 - Resolve or update conditions no longer active or that have changed
 - Add newly identified conditions to the problem list, assessment, and plan
 - Ensure the documentation is:
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Consistent
 - Complete
 - Comprehensive
 - Apply TAMPER to documentation:
 - Treatment: Any medical intervention, therapy, or medication provided for the condition
 - Assessment: The evaluation of the diagnosis and any related factors
 - Monitor/Medicate: Ongoing observation of the medical condition's signs, symptoms, and progression, or any changes in medication
 - Plan: Future care strategies, such as planned treatments or follow-up care for the condition
 - Evaluate: The effectiveness of treatments, the patient's response to those treatments, or the review of recent test results
 - Referral: Directing the patient to a specialist or additional healthcare services
 - Each medical record date of service should contain:
 - Visit date of service
 - Provider's name, signature, credentials, and date signed
 - Industry standard abbreviations
 - Active chronic conditions that require ongoing treatment and monitoring
 - Active status conditions
 - All conditions that impact patient care, treatment, and/or management

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Questions? Please contact the Alliance Stars Team
 Email: **DeptStarsTeam@alamedaalliance.org**
www.alamedaalliance.org