

HOW CAN AMKAISOLUTIONS HELP GET YOUR FACILITY SUCCESSFULLY THROUGH AN AUDIT?

AmkaiSolutions client Joan Mckibben, Administrator of the Ambulatory Surgery Center of Somerset in Bridgewater, NJ shares some insights about the AAAHC audit process after her facility passed with flying colors:

How long was the process from beginning to end? The onsite survey turned out to be just a day and half, but there was a lot of advance preparation involved. With a Medicare inspection, there is a 90 day window where the inspectors may potentially show up. This means the facility and the entire staff is essentially on a three-month hold, waiting for the visit.

What were the steps involved? To get you ready for the audit, AAAHC produces a book that can be purchased; there are multiple chapters devoted to areas such as pharmaceutical services, administrative, medical surgical services, medical record governance, etc, and your facility needs to meet all standards within each area. Medicare Deemed Status has to additionally comply with Federal Medicare standards, so the inspectors will also need to see licensing, credentialing and employment files for all nurses, techs, secretaries, etc, which was all available through the AmkaiOffice program.

They asked to review 15 complete medical records and thoroughly went through each one as though it were a paper chart. Since we have only been in operation for one year, they reviewed every file from our last two months, checking for things like advanced directives, discharge instructions, legibility in charting, etc.

How many staff members were involved? Our entire staff of 14 was involved in various aspects of the audit.

What were the biggest challenges? The greatest challenge to the audit process was ensuring all the required information was there and double checking it was current, things like licensing info, OR reports posted, etc. From an administrator's standpoint, staying on top of it all and making sure everyone was doing what they should be was the main focus. The greatest challenge of our moving into an EMR was educating the staff and getting them comfortable with the technology. AmkaiSolutions provided excellent training and support to transition our staff to an EMR. Happily, it all worked out and they've gotten better and better every day. It was a great thing for us to have done.

What would the audit have been like if you had been on a paper system? We would have pulled paper charts and it would have taken much longer and been much more complex. The computer made it neat, clean, legible; once they looked through a few files and saw everything was there, they were much more relaxed about the remainder. It was clear that AmkaiCharts prompted what was missing as the case was being charted, so it was obvious that the advance directives were in. The auditors actually said we had a GREAT system; everything was easy to read, organized and neat, it was completely smooth sailing for them.

What particular aspects of AmkaiCharts were most helpful in the process? Amkai is set up with advanced directives which are asked up front and documented, so all elements required for inspection had effortlessly been imbedded in the chart. That was one of the things that drew us to AmkaiSolutions in the first place – the system is very nursing-focused and patient safety goals all are there; competitive products did not chart all elements that are part of inspection. We selected Amkai after a year of looking, knowing that we were going to seek AAAHC accreditation. Amkai’s big focus on patient safety – with things like comprehensive advance directives, discharge instructions and allergies -- were all required elements. Every piece they were looking for was there and easy to see and to read.

How else did AmkaiSolutions help make the process go smoothly? At one point the auditors were looking for discharge summaries that we hadn’t been using. We called the AmkaiSolutions helpline for a quick refresher on how to use some of the features and had no problem going back and showing the auditors. Emily and Bob, our primary Amkai contacts, have gone out of their way to help at any time of day, during, before and after.

What advice do you have for other facilities going through the audit process? Make sure that you have a staff that is proficient with computers and can sit comfortably with an inspector. The fact that our staff had been well trained and were able to easily retrieve information made whole process pretty seamless. We were organized and neat, not hiding behind stacks and stacks of paper. The records were legible, dated and timed, and it was easy for the auditors to find what they were looking for. Everything they needed was there, so it was really very straightforward and went quickly. I’m glad to be able to share these perspectives, as the anxiety was high going in, and we can see in retrospect it didn’t have to be.

Any other thoughts on the move to an EMR? It pays, on so many levels to automate! We currently have two centers – one that is now automated and an older center that is still on paper. Now that we can compare the two, it’s clear they are worlds apart; it has become so much easier to track patients, look at aggregate data, stay on top of the whole patient record. And this ability was tremendously helpful in the audit process – everything an inspector would look for was already imbedded in the chart. It definitely outweighed the hurdle of moving over to automation. In fact, after the audit we went and spoke to our Board and will be bringing Amkai over to our second facility.

