

SHARING

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Converting Self-pay to Pay: Partnering for Third-party Eligibility Assistance

BY BARBARA WRAY

When a patient who was in the country illegally came to Medical Center Hospital in Odessa for care, the hospital helped him. When the hospital then needed to get reimbursed for his treatment, Resource Corporation of America helped.

Hospital staff got the patient Section 1011 eligibility and needed to get reimbursement for the \$1 million bill, but once he left the hospital, it was difficult to locate him. “RCA hired a private investigator to find him and got the paperwork signed so the hospital could get paid,” said J.R. Edmiston, director of patient financial services for Medical Center Hospital. “Last year, RCA helped us convert \$35 million of self-pay into a funded source.”

Resource Corporation of America, a provider of third-party self-pay eligibility services, helps hospitals convert self-pay to a paying status. The firm offers extensive knowledge of the application, certification and appellate processes for third-party assistance programs in all 50 states. RCA customer Stacy Miller, chief operating officer for HCA Shared Services’ San Antonio/Austin division, said, “Our mission is to provide affordable access to health care. The services that RCA provides at our facilities allow us to do that.”

It’s About Numbers – and People

Billing to the correct insurance plan is critical. “For example, Medicaid has a 95-day filing deadline. There’s no margin for error,” said Miller. “RCA makes sure we have matched up the right plan to the right product so we can convert to cash.”

When Miller began working with RCA, inpatient conversion averaged 30 percent. In one year’s time, it is averaging 82 percent. “RCA has hit record numbers in conversions over the last two months with conversion rates that have exceeded any previous vendor. We’ve set record revenue levels the last three months,” she said.

“Above and beyond the cash flow, RCA provides a service to our community,” Miller continued. “RCA is helping people without insurance coverage have a way of feeling safe about health care.”

Becoming Part of the Team

“Our primary goal is to become an integral part of the business office at the hospital,” said Mark Taiclet, director of business development for RCA. “We deal on a daily basis with case workers and business managers, and we know what’s going on with patients and how we can help them.”

RCA is committed to providing staff trained in making proper determinations when screening a patient. “It’s about timing.

Solid training helps us turn things around faster. Higher certification rates and lower turnaround times mean more money coming into the hospital, sooner,” Taiclet said.

RCA staff often educate patients about the process and help them fill out paperwork properly and secure necessary documentation. “Our goal is to help hospitals recuperate as much as possible on their self-pay. We honestly care about the patients, too, and work hand-in-hand with them all the time. Taiclet said.

“We also advocate on behalf of patients in the reconsideration process. If they get denied, but we know they should be eligible, we’ll go back and help them get covered. You have to care about what you’re doing in this business,” he continued. “People come to work for RCA because they truly want to help people.”

Leadership Starts at the Top

When Edmiston first came on board in Odessa, he was looking for ways to improve processes, so RCA’s corporate leaders came on-site. They met with staff, retrained them as needed and brought in people who had been successful in some larger hospitals.

“I hadn’t worked with RCA staff until I came to Odessa. I pushed them hard, and they really stepped up to the plate. Two and a half years later, they’re still doing a good job,” said Edmiston. “For six months, they were heavily involved in getting staff up to par. They built relationships with case management, social workers and me to where everybody got on same page. In the beginning, we had some things to smooth out, but the RCA executive staff were here, working with us in the cubicles. We’ve come through that process. Times are good now, and they’re still coming through for us.”

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