



# Maximizing Reimbursement: Third-Party Eligibility Services Help Hospitals Recover At-Risk Revenue

BY KAREN BRANZ

**When Kirk Jones first came to North Cypress Medical Center as patient access director, he saw room for improvement in helping uninsured patients apply for public medical assistance programs. The vendor responsible for working with these patients was having trouble keeping trained staff on board, and as a result, too many patients were not getting help and too many accounts were going unpaid that might have been reimbursed.**

"I had worked with Resource Corporation of America at a previous hospital that had a high volume of uninsured patients, and the company had done an outstanding job. When we were able to end the contract with the previous vendor, we switched to RCA," he said. "RCA has dedicated staff on-site to interview patients to see if they qualify for any federal, state or local medical assistance programs. They are very knowledgeable about the requirements for each of these programs, and they work to find the program to fit the patient's qualifications."

This kind of assistance has been more important than ever the last few years. Jones noted that due to the recession, a lot of unemployed and uninsured patients are showing up at the emergency room.

"RCA has been a huge success for us and a crucial part of our revenue cycle and bed debt prevention endeavors. We are able to bill out as much as \$1 million a month in charges that otherwise would have been lost to bad debt or charity," Jones said.

James Finklea, RCA regional vice president, noted that every team member undergoes extensive training.

"We want to be the go-to resource for hospitals that need help in capturing at-risk dollars. Current trends in health care reimbursement continue to fluctuate, making every potentially recoverable dollar vital to health care providers," Finklea said. "We differentiate ourselves by focusing on the speed of cash conversion, reaching out to all patients at all points of contact within 24 hours. Currently we average 91 percent certification success on all accounts we pursue for third-party reimbursement."

In addition to working with patients at the time of their hospital visit, RCA uses a proprietary Medicaid eligibility scan program called ProfitPal™ to identify Medicaid-eligible patients and convert possible bad debt or charity into reimbursements.

"Sometimes patients become certified for Medicaid or another program after they leave the hospital, but they don't think to let the hospital know that. This program identifies patients who have become certified so that hospitals can move quickly to send in claims to be sure that filing deadlines aren't missed," Finklea said.

That coverage information also is shared with the physicians who treated the patients so they can submit claims.

"We also have a program that works with pregnant women who are uninsured to help them get coverage early in their pregnancies," Finklea said. "An uninsured patient is referred to us by a physician as soon as she receives a positive pregnancy test. We help her in the process of qualifying for assistance as soon as possible so she will have earlier access to the prenatal care that she and her baby need.

And when she arrives at the hospital for delivery, she arrives with medical insurance to cover that stay."

Jones said that RCA's reporting mechanisms help North Cypress Medical Center anticipate financial results.

"I get weekly reports on approvals and denials so that we can know what to expect and what money will be coming in," Jones said.

RCA bills for its services based on the amount of revenue it helps hospitals capture. Because there are no fixed fees for the services provided, the hospital's costs are tied to RCA's performance.

"Hospitals pay based on a percentage of the revenue we help them bring in. If the hospital doesn't get paid, it doesn't pay us," Finklea said.

"It is well worth a small percentage of the revenue to have RCA's help in getting these patients certified. The patients benefit from better access to medical services, and we capture more of the revenue we've earned," Jones said.

For more information about RCA, contact James Finklea at [jamesfinklea@resource-corp.com](mailto:jamesfinklea@resource-corp.com) or 281/334-1855 or go to [www.resource-corp.com](http://www.resource-corp.com). \*

