



HOW LONG SHOULD I KEEP MY RECORDS?

Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS) Medicare has received numerous questions from the provider community on keeping and storing records. Performing a search on the Internet will bring back many different answers, timeframes, and justifications for the noted timeframes. Providers who sign the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Enrollment form agree to keep medical records no less than 6 years, three months after Medicare paid the claim. This means that if a claim for a date of service 1/1/05 completes processing on 6/30/05, the provider should keep all records pertaining to that service until at least 9/30/11. There are several types of records to consider.

Medical documentation supports services provided to the patient. WPS Medicare uses this documentation to verify the provider performed the service billed, coded the service appropriately, and documented the medical necessity of the service. Accurate and complete records are a worthwhile investment in the event of an audit. Providers should store records in a format that makes for easy retrieval.

The entity receiving payment is responsible for supplying documentation in the event of a Medicare request. A provider performing services in a facility or for a purchased diagnostic service should verify the documentation is available.

The second type of record is notification of any payments from an insurance primary to Medicare. This includes the Explanation of Benefits and any appeals the provider made pertaining to the claim.

The next record type is the payment record from Medicare. This includes Remittance notices, overpayment notices, record of payments back to Medicare, and any appeals taken on specific claims.

The fourth type of record is the provider enrollment information. This indicates the provider is who they say they are and is located where they claim to be. The enrollment information indicates if the entity is a group and that members of the group really do exist.

Medicare has received questions on record retention when the provider retires, leaves a practice, or passes away. The same information listed above applies.

Providers should use the timeframe listed above, any state statutes or their own comfort level in determining how long to keep their records.