MAKE A SCHEDULE.

Create a checklist to ensure your practice is on track with ICD-10. To get started, click on the link, “The ICD-10 Delay: A Checklist to Get Back on Track,” in the resources section below. Sample items to feature in your checklist include:

- Plan your budget for technology upgrades and resource investments.
- Plan a schedule and additional budget allocation for training your staff.
- Conduct external testing with your clearinghouses and payers to make sure you can send and receive transactions with the ICD-10 codes.

— Divan Dave, CEO, health IT provider OmniMD
BUDGET SMART.

According to an analysis from the AMA, the costs of implementing ICD-10 could range from $56,639 to $226,105 for small practices and $213,364 to $824,735 for medium-sized practices. Make sure your practice budgets accordingly.

— Avery Hurt, Physicians Practice writer

GET PHYSICIANS INVOLVED.

Enlist physicians as part of your ICD-10 work group to help ensure you make reasonable ICD-10-related decisions and that the messaging coming from the top down comes from the physicians’ peers in plain language.

— James M. Taylor, physician director of coding and revenue cycle, Kaiser Permanente
STRESS THE GOOD STUFF.

To help get staff and physicians on board with ICD-10 prep, make sure to discuss some of the benefits the transition will bring. They include:

- Reduced denials due to more specific documentation
- Time savings due to several combination codes used to classify two diagnoses, a diagnosis with an associated sign or symptom, or a diagnosis with an associated complication.
- More noncompliance codes that protect physicians legally by documenting when patients are not taking their medication as prescribed or are not being compliant with their treatment.

– Jackie Stack, director of ICD-10 training and education, AAPC

ASSESS YOUR TRAINING NEEDS.

Poll your physicians and staff members individually regarding the extent of their use of ICD and CPT coding. This can help you determine training needs.

- At the very least, all providers and staff should receive an overview of ICD-10 details.
- Providers will need training focused on their practice or specialty.
- Office referral and registration staff may need comprehensive ICD-10-CM training for assigning and reporting diagnostic codes.

– Barb Gondys, director, health information management practice excellence, American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)
IDENTIFY WHO NEEDS “INTENSE” TRAINING.

Provide intense ICD-10 training after introductory training. Identified staff should have already been exposed to an introduction of the structural differences between the ICD-9 and ICD-10 code sets, nuances, mapping, and terminology basics.

Tailor the more robust training to the type of staff that will be participating. For instance, training for medical coders in an organization will not be the same as training for physicians and advanced practitioners.

— MeShawn Foster, ICD-10 trainer, AHIMA

DETERMINE WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING TO PROVIDE.

Everyone learns differently, so determine what training method would most benefit your staff members and physicians. Options include:

• Traditional face-to-face classroom teaching
• Audio conferences
• Self-directed learning programs
• Web-based instruction (self-directed or instructor-led)

— Barb Glondys, director, health information management practice excellent, AHIMA
SUPPLEMENT TRAINING WITH TECHNOLOGY.

Your more tech-savvy physicians and staff might respond well to ICD-10 practice and training apps. Brenda Edwards, an AAPC ICD-10 trainer, likes ICD Pulse, Precyse (flash cards), and Stat ICD-10 coder.

— Avery Hurt, Physicians Practice writer

START A DIALOGUE WITH VENDORS.

Check with your practice management and EHR vendors to ensure they are prepared for the transition. Ask key questions such as:

- Is your software going to run on the same platform and database that we are currently using?
- Will I be able to search for ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes in your ICD-10 compliant systems?
- Will you help me test my ICD-10 compliant EHR and practice management system with my payers?

For more questions, click on the link, “ICD-10 Readiness: 15 Questions to Ask Your Health IT Vendors,” in the resources section below.

— Samuel S. Ambrose, former chief marketing officer and vice president of sales, health IT provider Pulse Systems
PRACTICE.

Start practicing the ICD-10 codes side-by-side with the ICD-9 codes so that you will become thoroughly familiar with the new codes well before you are required to use them.

Brenda Edwards, an AAPC ICD-10 trainer, said:

“When you code in ICD-9, ask yourself, ‘What will this be in ICD-10?’”

— Avery Hurt, Physicians Practice writer

LOOK OUT FOR RED FLAGS.

If many of your claims are denied as “not medically necessary” and/or many of your pre-authorizations for diagnostic tests are denied because there is “no covered indication,” you could be in serious hot water. These are diagnosis-code problems in ICD-9 and they are only going to get worse in ICD-10 when the volume of diagnosis codes explodes to 70,000.

Work on fixing the problems now, and expect some glitches during the transition.

— Betsy Nicolette, founder, Codapedia.com
START USING SPECIFIC ICD-10 DIAGNOSIS CODES NOW.

It is easy to be complacent about diagnosis coding in a medical practice because most ICD-9 codes support the medical necessity for an E&M service. Still, ICD-10 will require a lot more specificity. If you run a report and find a high frequency of unspecified codes (codes ending in .9), pay attention. Start using specific ICD-9 diagnosis codes now to ease the transition to the more detailed and descriptive ICD-10 system.

— Betsy Nicolette, founder, Codapedia.com