NINE QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE MEDICAL BILLING PARTNERS

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Having a certified coder working on your account is not strictly necessary, but it can be helpful. What's more important is that your contract biller or billing service is connected to a community of professionals and committed to continuous learning. And if your specialty has many specific coding needs, it's important to know how your biller will acquire that knowledge, if they don't have it already.

What certifications or association memberships do your employees have? And do they have experience in our specialty?
One of the most common complaints practices have with billing services is that they focus on low-hanging fruit. Be sure you have a commitment from your biller to fight for your money. And, be sure you know what collection responsibilities, if any, your staff will be expected to handle. You'll also need to know if you need to set up your own collection agency relationship, and make sure you get to decide when and how accounts are sent to collections.

What are your processes for dealing with common challenges like down-coding, denied claims, and aging receivables?
The ability to directly oversee staff training and ensure they're staying on top of payment changes that affect your practice is one of the strongest arguments against outsourcing — so make sure any outsourcing partner you choose has a solid plan for dealing with these important changes.

How does your service stay on top of major changes like ICD-10, bundled payments, and coordinated care?
If the service is small or a single contractor, then you'll want to know what hours they'll be available to help you. With a larger billing organization, knowing you'll have a dedicated contact that can troubleshoot for you helps ensure your business will get proper attention, especially if you're just one of dozens of clients.

**Will we have a dedicated contact we can work with to solve problems?**

**Who will be working our daily claims and receivables?**
You need to be sure any potential biller you hire takes its ability to deliver for your practice as seriously as you do. Knowing how they monitor their own results can provide insight into what they consider good, bad, or indifferent performance on your behalf.

*What benchmarks do you use to evaluate your own performance?*
Ideally, you'll be able to access your accounts and run reports on your own. But you'll still want to know what reports are available for you to access when needed. And if you plan to rely on your service to report on their own results, you should be sure that the data they'll report gives you the information you need about your business and their performance.

**May we see a full set of sample reports?**

**Will we be able to run our own reports and view billing and collection information at will?**
Switching to a new billing service can be a great opportunity to upgrade your billing and practice management software. But you'll want to know what is involved in converting; what your costs will be, what kind of training is available, and if, and how, you'll integrate the software with your EHR.

What type of technology training is offered at start up?

*If we have to convert to a new software platform, what is the process and how will you assist us?*
With medical identity theft and related fraud on the rise, you'll need to know how your billing service deals with these issues and protects your patients and your practice.

What kind of protections do you offer practice clients from fraud, theft, or errors by your employees?

Do you indemnify your clients against any of these?
Can you provide us with references we can speak with?

It's always useful to speak with clients of any service you're considering working with — especially clients in your specialty. If you're facing a system conversion, it can also be helpful to speak with a practice that recently went through that process.