Pharmacist Spotlight:

Policies and Procedures

Healthcare Providers Service Organization (HPSO) in collaboration with CNA has published the 2nd Edition of our *Pharmacist Claim Report*. The report includes statistical data and legal case studies taken from CNA's claim database, along with risk management recommendations designed to help pharmacists reduce their professional liability exposures and improve patient safety.

You can find the full report at: www.hpso.com/pharmacistclaimreport

This Pharmacist Spotlight focuses on our analysis and risk control recommendations regarding one of the most significant topics from the report: Issues related to Policies and Procedures.

Policy and Procedure

Written policies and procedures serve as an operating framework within which pharmacists and pharmacy owners can accomplish essential clinical and administrative tasks in a systematic and consistent manner. The term policy refers to governing principles that reflect an organization's mission, philosophy and goals, while procedure denotes measures required to implement the policy. Organizations/businesses that lack formal practice parameters or that diverge from written policy may find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of accreditation, regulatory compliance and legal defense in the event of a claim.

At a time when every facet of the healthcare industry is emphasizing patient safety, quality and efficiency, the importance of well-crafted policies and procedures cannot be overstated. Not only do sound policies aid in reducing practice variation and errors, but they also serve the following vital purposes:

- Enhancing continuity of care by promoting a consistent, sequential approach.
- Serving as a written reference for regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies.
- Establishing clear lines of authority and facilitating delegation of responsibility.
- Instituting defined, objective parameters for evaluating employee performance.
- Facilitating orientation of new employees and educating veteran staff about changes.
- Strengthening leadership by fostering compliance with directives.
- Supporting defense efforts in lawsuits involving standard of care issues.

Written policies and procedures primarily seek to improve patient outcomes. Thus, most organizations focus initially on clinical practices associated with the delivery of patient care and gradually move toward standardization of administrative functions.

The HPSO/CNA publication **Policy and Procedure: A Healthcare Business Owner's Guide to Developing, Reviewing and Implementing Written Protocols** provides a range of guidelines designed to support policy and procedure development and review. Also included in the publication are a convenient risk management checklist and a template guide designed to help pharmacists and pharmacy business owners evaluate and improve their policymaking process.

Risk Management Self-assessment Checklist for Pharmacy Business Owners

The following abbreviated checklist, selected to focus on policies and procedures, can serve as a starting point for pharmacists and pharmacy business owners seeking to evaluate and improve their policymaking process.

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	YES/NO	COMMENT/ACTION PLAN
Drafting Policies and Procedures		
When drafting policies and procedures, leadership is careful to:		
- Follow an approved template, style and format.		
- Focus on patient/client safety issues.		
- Write at an accessible, non-expert level to maximize readership.		
- Use clear and concise language.		
- Link new policies and procedures to other organizational documents.		
- Comply with federal and state regulations.		
- Assign specific responsibilities to staff categories rather than named individuals.		
- Create statements that are informative, self-explanatory, practical and realistic.		
- Avoid conflicting or interfering with existing practices and protocols.		
Maintenance of Policies and Procedures		
Existing policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with actual practice.		
Dates of policy implementation, review and revision are documented.		
Retention of Policies and Procedures		
Policy statements are retained for a set period in conformity with federal, state, local and institutional requirements.		
Outdated or modified policies and procedures are properly archived for later retrieval in case of litigation.		
Staff education		
Relevant policies and procedures are provided to newly hired staff during initial orientation.		
Staff members review policies and procedures on a regular basis and acknowledge in writing that they have read them and understand them.		
Staff members are educated about new or revised policies and procedures prior to their implementation.		
All records concerning staff education about policies and procedures are retained in personnel files.		

This information was excerpted from HPSO and CNA's full report, *Pharmacist Liability Claim Report: 2nd Edition.*
www.hpso.com/pharmacistclaimreport

Pharmacist Liability Claim Report: 2nd Edition

Identifying and Addressing
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