

The Transcription Supervisor

By Judy Hinickle, CMT

The medical transcription supervisor serves as an advocate for medical transcriptionists. The supervisor is the only person who can knowledgeably and legitimately speak for the transcriptionists because he or she knows what they do, has done what they do, understands what they do, knows their problems, and has access to higher levels of authority.

The supervisor must also make the medical transcriptionists visible to the physicians who need to know that the initials at the bottom of their reports do not simply represent some amorphous and magical printer that has converted their dictation into the printed word. The supervisor sets the tone for the transcription unit and establishes standards for quality of work and production.

Job Description:

Medical Transcription Supervisor

The medical transcription supervisor manages a maximum number of well-trained transcriptionists doing the best possible quality transcription in a timely manner, in a given word processing environment, within production guidelines set by management.

The medical transcription supervisor actively serves the needs of employees, and serves as a role model in professional attitude, knowledge, demeanor and execution of duties. The supervisor must ensure that the transcription office functions properly through all shifts of the seven-day week, and through all growth and development stages.

The transcription supervisor understands the job, possesses the ability to do it, and delegates and trains in appropriate areas so all work times are covered with appropriate supervision. The end result should be employees who are happy and productive, and medical staff satisfied with the transcription product.

The medical transcription supervisor must have an excellent background in medical transcription, thorough knowledge of medical terminology, and basic understanding of anatomy and physiology, disease processes, medications, and so forth. Good spelling, grammar, and punctuation are needed.

The medical transcription supervisor must be familiar with available reference books and be able to use them effectively. In order to supervise quality control, it is desirable that the supervisor have superior typing skills, an understanding of accents and dialects, and be qualified to make appropriate and superior decisions in the transcription process itself. Experience in a hospital health information management department is helpful to understand the needs of the medical staff.

The medical transcription supervisor interviews and selects new employees. S/he:

- Must have the ability to interview and test applicants for the positions available in the department, and the ability to evaluate their potential as employees.

- Trains and evaluates department employees.
- Is responsible for training new employees, ensuring that they are able to appropriately adjust to their new work environment, operate equipment and know the requirements of the tasks that they are assigned to work on.
- Is responsible for work done by new employees until appropriate competency is achieved.
- Is responsible for noting transcription inadequacies that can be improved, and for making the appropriate recommendations and arrangements, always bearing in mind a sincere regard for the employee and the medical staff.

The medical transcription supervisor must communicate to employees the expectations regarding quality and quantity of work. S/he:

- Is responsible for quality control and its implementation throughout all transcription areas.
- Is responsible for regular evaluations of all transcription employees according to department standards and procedures.
- Is to monitor closely and regularly the production standards in the department.
- Is to oversee a transcription training program in conjunction with maintaining quality standards.

The medical transcription supervisor effectively communicates with medical staff, management, and employees. S/he:

- Communicates with medical staff, resolving all problems that may arise to the mutual benefit of the parties involved.
- Communicates with the management, keeping them informed of work flow, office problems, and evaluating office needs (particularly personnel) related to the above duties which may fluctuate with work volume and future expansion plans.
- Communicates daily plans with the lead transcriptionist and keeps him/her informed of daily goals and problems, schedule changes, equipment problems, etc., so quality and production standards are met appropriately.
- Communicates as needed with medical staff and other appropriate department representatives; keeps them informed of any problems that might arise; requests their assistance with problems specific to that dictation; maintains a friendly, cooperative working relationship; and keeps attuned to changes in their needs and observes patterns in their requests.
- Communicates with the personnel department concerning all requirements related to present and future personnel and their working needs, office environment, or the need for additional positions.

The medical transcription supervisor is responsible for the generation of statistical reports for the department. S/he:

- Provides statistics on the volume of dictation and transcription and equipment utilization.
- Provides statistics on quality and production
- Formulates a budget for the medical transcription department.

The medical transcription supervisor is responsible for creating and maintaining employee manuals that contain information on general office functions and information pertinent to each dictator.

The medical transcription supervisor is responsible for employee work schedules and work assignments. S/he:

- Schedules employees effectively, keeping in mind the amount of work, equipment availability, and the employees' level of experience and their preferences. Accepts employee requests for vacation or other time off and approves or denies.
- Is certain that employee work assignments and availability achieve work completion according to the turnaround time agreed upon with the medical staff.
- Creates and posts the work schedule, recording each employee's hours and assigned workstation.
- Makes work assignments for each day, taking employee's experience, production, incentive schedules, and possibly their preferences in mind.
- Makes sure that work received that day will be completed within agreed-upon time frames.
- Throughout the day, notes any unusual items, such as employees calling in sick, or drop in dictation volume, and adjusts schedule as needed.
- Reviews the schedule daily to make any necessary changes.

The medical transcription supervisor is responsible for the office equipment. S/he:

- Is thoroughly familiar with the dictation equipment, word processing equipment, and other office equipment, must be able to use it, and train others to use it.
- Is certain the equipment is kept in good working order under existing maintenance contracts.
- Is involved in expansion activities or changes in the department as needed.

The above sample job description demonstrates the most likely duties of a full-time supervisor in a fairly large department. However, it is often not possible to allot a full-time employee to this job, or to find a person qualified in all areas. In those cases, the mix-and-match theory can be utilized.

While the supervisor may be ultimately responsible for the equitable assignment of transcription work, for quality control, and for creation of procedure manuals, an excellent lead transcriptionist can perform some of the supervisory duties. With that added responsibility, of course, the lead transcriptionist will produce less actual transcription. The supervisor should probably continue to handle personnel issues, schedules, personality conflicts, and intense contact with staff.