# Forrest General Hospital Case Study

## Experiences with Outsourced Coding Support

**TrustHCS helps regional health system tackle volume spikes and coding study without adding onsite staff**

> "Our long history with the company makes outsourced coding with TrustHCS seamless. There is real strength in partnership. Having a close relationship with people you can count on for support is invaluable."
>
> - Phyllis Spiers, RHIT, HIM Director

### Remote Coding: Healthcare's Ally amid Rising Claims Complexity

Medical record coding teams face a number of new healthcare initiatives that bring increased complexity to the world of billing and reimbursement. Meeting ICD-10 requirements while planning for MACRA and maintaining daily coding throughput is an ongoing struggle for HIM. Many healthcare organizations are turning to outsourced coding service partners for help with new program demands and rising claims volumes.

Recent Black Book research findings show that approximately 72 percent of participants in a survey of 1,865 hospital coding, medical record, and financial office leaders outsourced more than half of their coding needs in 2016. The executives at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg, Mississippi are part of that number.

### Meeting Forrest's Coding Challenges

Forrest General leadership originally found their facility needed help handling claims volumes that exceeded the existing coding team's capacity. For much of the past decade, the health system has relied on TrustHCS for remote coding services as an extension of their internal coding team.

HIM Director Phyllis Spiers oversees coding for Forrest General's 13 clinics and 5 hospitals, including the main 512-bed facility and two critical access hospitals—with help from TrustHCS. According to Spiers, since first contracting with the company in 2009, TrustHCS is "the lone survivor among several outsourced coding companies the health system has engaged."

### Organization

A 5-hospital, 13-clinic health system

### Challenge

Meet rising coding volume demands and audit observation versus inpatient hour trends

### Solution

TrustHCS Remote Coding Services to improve throughput and facilitate coding study

### Results

Met coding volume objectives and KPIs, produced actionable findings from observation hours coding study

**TrustHCS**
HEALTHCARE CONSULTING SERVICES

"Their professionals do a great job consistently meeting accuracy and exceeding the 95-percent established accuracy standards," reports Spiers. All told, Forrest General runs approximately 39,000 inpatient discharges a year, 86,000 emergency visits a year, and 720 to 760 observations a month within the main facility.

Beyond the remote coding firm's routine role in helping the system fill coder shortages, Spiers most recently tapped on TrustHCS for assistance with a special coding project. Leadership wanted to strengthen the confidence level for billing accuracy of reported observation versus inpatient hours for emergency department visits, which represent separate ambulatory payment classification codes.

## Experiences with Outsourced Coding Support

To help Forrest General accomplish recurring coding volume management objectives, TrustHCS experts work with the team to fill coding gaps as needed. This largely occurs when claims volumes spike or coders are out. TrustHCS also supported the system through a slight dip in workflow after ICD-10 adoption in late 2016. "They continue to help us address needs related to physician documentation specificity for ICD-10," says Spiers.

The observation hours study was the latest endeavor in a string of special projects guided by TrustHCS and the company lends coding resources to both inpatient and outpatient areas as needs arise.

## The Power of Partnership

Spiers points to the open lines of communication maintained by her health system, citing TrustHCS resources as a key factor in the success of the remote coding partnership. The partners typically communicate via email and phone calls, using web conferencing resources to address new workflow processes. Coding Manager Lorie Mills, RHIT, CCS, keeps in touch with coders on a regular basis. "Prompt and open communication with TrustHCS coders, managers and supervisors is a huge benefit," adds Spires.

Finally, Spiers reflects on the value that TrustHCS brings to the Forrest General Hospital coding department. "TrustHCS may be a higher cost resource compared to some, but they hire quality coders. We get great quality for our dollar," she concludes. "Our long history with the company makes it outsourced coding with TrustHCS seamless. There is real strength in our partnership."

**Challenges driving outsourced coder adoption:**

Weak coding productivity  l  Rising claims backlogs  l  MACRA preparation
Lack of ICD-10 expertise  l  Special coding projects

[1] Black Book Research, October 2016. Available online at: https://blackbookmarketresearch.newswire.com/news/outsourced-him-and-computer-assisted-coding-seen-as-panacea-for-15155000

# TrustHCS
## HEALTHCARE CONSULTING SERVICES

877.686.1123  l  www.TrustHCS.com  l  info@TrustHCS.com