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Lilia Teninty, Director, ODDS
Trisha Baxter, COO, APD, ODDS
Sent by email

Dear Lilia/Trisha,

When we met at the ORA Quarterly Membership meeting in September you heard from ORA members how they are experiencing great difficulty in submitting bills through eXPRS, are getting conflicting information from various State sources, have been required to hire significant numbers of administrative staff to bill and that DSP's are spending every more time on paperwork and less on direct support. In an effort to address these concerns Trisha took on the challenge of being the point of contact and committed to "cutting checks" if needed and addressed individual member concerns. We are grateful for that assistance.

However, the problem has not abated and in fact is growing. It is now a system wide impediment in provider agencies and as one ORA member put it, "is sucking the life right out of us." It has pushed administrative/billing staff to the edge of frustration and long hours of overtime when they have to deal with new rates (some reduced) new terminology and definitions and the implementation of multiple system/Rule changes.

I am not one to panic and cry "wolf" without reason but this is causing significant hardship, pain and unexpected cost at the provider level which translates to service delivery issues.

I have some specific examples to share with you but the point of this letter is to be very clear that this is no longer something that can be addressed one provider at a time. ***It is a system wide issue that is escalating and putting providers and the system at risk. The same providers are being asked to do more with less, learn a lot of new skills, Rules and comply with new expectations.***

Trying to patch up and re-tool eXPRS feels like putting a band aid on a gaping wound. ***Providers are making a plea for relief and for another alternative to billing through the eXPRS system and relief from added administrative costs.***

I know you've received some of this information already from a variety of sources but I will share some of it with you again to underscore the urgency:

Time intensive system:

The new billing system for Day Services (DD54 and Brokerages) is incredibly labor intensive. Included below are details to explain why it is more burdensome and to share how much time it is adding to our staff's work week. Since eXPRS is not set up to upload data, the process is a cumbersome line by line entry. Here is a weekly estimate for the additional time required by one agency's staff at all levels to use the new process.

- Adds 1.25 hours per week of Direct Support Professionals time for each participant (entering hourly billing onto a tracking sheet for each service the participant uses);
- Adds 3 hours per week of Management time for every 35 participants (required to ensure that the information staff enter is correct and submitted to billing);
- Adds 40 hours per week of Billing Staff time to do the following (this covers about 250 participants):
 - Enter this information onto a spreadsheet required for auditing for DD54 participants.
 - Enter this information onto invoices with progress notes for brokerage participants.
 - Enter this information into eXPRS for all participants.

Other examples of one agency's added staff cost:

Data Collection- At the staff level each employee is needing at least 20% of their day dedicated to raw data entry in order to facilitate proper billing. (The ReBAR - DSP/Job Coach hours were not loaded with any time for documentation and paperwork). This time has more than doubled with the new billing system. This a major uncovered cost at the provider level. Some are successfully using Therap track data and time.

Quality check on data entry before sent to the billing department - Necessary to hire a full time person to the Employment Administration team. It is more than a full time job to review all data entry and prepare for billing. **This is not accounted for in the current rate structure.**

The billing process is taking a very skilled staff accountant two full days a week on top of her already large workload. It is expected that a new position to our accounting team will also be necessary.

System functionality problems with eXPRS:

- When accounting is billing, which takes hours, eXPRS logs you out automatically every 30 minutes...and does not save your work.
- The set up does not makes sense and the system is not user friendly. For example you cannot change the sort order, which extends the billing time.
- Counties are using different codes for the same service.
- Data cannot be exported to excel for ease of double check or processing. So if we need to create an excel spread as a cross check staff has to recreate all the documentation in excel.
- When you push save all to keep it from logging you out, it completely resets your screen, so all the adjustments made to flag work you have done is lost.
- To double check work, it helps to print the screen- which is 15 pages long per day. Screens frequently freeze.
- When a mistake is made on either end everything has to be reversed and redone. When the State decides to fix something providers are not notified as to when and why so they have to spend the time researching and verifying the corrections. This can cause errors and result in added cost/time.
- Pulling reports from eXPRS is next to impossible and takes hours at the user end.
- We have not been able to bill since September 2015. There is approximately 30% of clients that do not have POC authorizations.
- The claims menu has no sorting option. The billing screen has no intuitive features at all. This seems like a small detail, but when you are making 11,500 entries per month (minimum) it makes a huge difference.
- Claims stuck in pending/draft status. In some cases, providers still cannot submit bills because their CDDP has not entered the data correctly or at all so providers are waiting to avoid the cumbersome process of void and resubmit.

What would help?

Allow providers to upload Excel and/or other spreadsheets into eXPRS. This would have an immediate positive impact on the workload figures outlined above. The system would still be much more complex than we are accustomed, but it would eliminate the need for doing line by line entry multiple times.

Multiple Interpretations of requirements:

Brokerage Directors are currently interpreting their rule to require that providers still provide invoices and progress notes for brokerage participants, despite the fact that they are now also required to enter the information into eXPRS for actual billing. Thus, they are required to do all of the paperwork done before, plus add the burdensome process of line by line entry into eXPRS.

What would help?

Clarify this expectation and eliminate the need to continue to provide invoices and progress notes for brokerage participants. It would create parity within the system, as these documents are not required for DD54 participants who are often served side-by-side and in an identical manner to brokerage participants.

This list was not intended to be or could it be all inclusive. ***My intention was to emphasize the urgency and the need for an expedited solution.*** Providers would like to be part of the solution and be at the table to support the State in identifying, addressing and/or quantifying the impacts of the new hourly billing system for Day Services.

Let me know how ORA members might be a constructive part of the process to find a solution. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Chris Burnett

Chris Burnett
Executive Director
ORA