



Powered by The Valley Health System and Kindred Hospitals



October 2025

NEWSLETTER

Volume 123

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#VegasStrong

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Spotlight: Hierarchical Condition Categories (HCCs)

As a participating practice with Silver State ACO, your role in accurate documentation of **Hierarchical Condition Categories (HCCs)** is vital. HCCs directly influence the care our patients receive, the resources available to support them, and the overall performance of our ACO.



HCCs are part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) risk adjustment methodology that groups ICD-10 codes into clinically related categories. These categories are then used to predict the patient's expected

healthcare costs and resource needs.

Each year, providers **must** recapture every active diagnosis so that the patient's current health status is fully represented.

Example:

- If a patient was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes with complications in 2024 but it is not documented again in 2025, CMS assumes the condition has resolved even if it hasn't. As a result, the patient's risk appears lower than it really is and CMS believes the patient is healthier than they actually are. Lower risk means less money allocated for that patient's care.



SPOTLIGHT

For patients, accurate HCC documentation ensures their complete health story is told. It allows the opportunity to identify care gaps early and connect them with services like chronic care management, medication support or disease education.

From the ACO perspective, HCC documentation plays a central role in how CMS sets the benchmark we are measured against. The benchmark represents the expected cost of caring for our patient

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Southern Nevada
Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2025

Northern Nevada:
Thursday, Nov. 6, 2025

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population. When conditions are not documented, patients appear healthier “on paper” than they truly are, which lowers the benchmark. That means we are being compared to an artificially low-cost target, making it harder to achieve shared savings. On the other hand, when HCCs are fully and accurately captured, the benchmark more fairly reflects the true complexity of our population. This gives the ACO and participating practices a better chance of meeting performance goals and generating shared savings.

To ensure accurate and complete capture of HCCs, consider the following best practices:

- **Annual Recapture:** Document, and address, all active chronic conditions at least once every calendar year.
- **Be Specific:** Avoid vague diagnoses. Use the most specific ICD-10 code available.
- **Link Diagnoses to Visits:** Always link conditions discussed during the encounter to the visit note and include them in the assessment & plan.
- **Address Every Condition:** Even if a condition is stable, acknowledge it (“Hypertension, controlled on current medication, continue regimen”).
- **Review Problem Lists:** Regularly update problem lists to avoid outdated or inactive diagnoses.
- **Paint the Full Picture:** Documentation should reflect that the condition is being *monitored, evaluated, assessed, or treated (MEAT)*
 - **Monitor:** labs, vitals, imaging, physical exam findings
 - **Evaluate:** review of symptoms, response to treatment, medication adherence
 - **Assess:** clinical impression or disease status (e.g., stable, improved, worsening)
 - **Treat:** prescribe medications, adjust therapy, make referrals, provide counseling



The bottom line is that HCCs are not just about coding, they are the way CMS makes sure patients get the care they need and practices get the resources they deserve. By recapturing every active condition annually, using specific codes, and documenting according to MEAT criteria - you’re helping patients, your practice, and our ACO succeed.

Please reach out to your Quality Coordinator if you have any further questions.

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HIPPA COMPLIANCE

“It takes a village.” Indeed, it takes a whole practice – and every employee in it – to effectively comply with HIPAA regulations.

There are seven elements to a compliance program. They are integrated processes; each an important piece of the compliance puzzle. If applied effectively, they can also streamline workflows for the practice and reduce costs while protecting patient data and, thereby, the practice’s reputation and HIPAA adherence.



The seven elements of a compliance program are:

1. Have – and follow- *written* policies and procedures, including expectations and standards of conduct.
2. Designate people responsible for compliance – a compliance committee and a compliance officer is optimal.
3. Conduct effective education and training sessions.
4. Maintain lines of communication, readily and easily available to all.
5. Conduct internal auditing and monitoring on a regular basis.
6. Enforce standards. Publicize disciplinary guidelines for non-compliance.
7. Respond promptly to any detected or reported offenses. Take corrective action without delay.

We recommend that you review each item on the list and consider how your practice is implementing systems to comply.

Practice Meetings

Silver State ACO sponsors quarterly practice meetings to educate and foster engagement between our Participants. In addition, the meetings give staff the opportunity to ask questions and interact with SSACO staff in a more congenial setting. There is often a presentation by one of our Preferred Providers, explaining procedures and therapies which practice staff may not be aware of or knowledgeable about. There are *always* chances to win prizes!

The last practice meeting for 2025 will be on Wednesday, November 5th in Southern Nevada and Thursday, November 6th in Northern Nevada. Please be sure to make every effort to attend!

The schedule for practice meetings for 2026 has just been finalized. Please mark your calendars now.

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Practice Meetings Schedule for 2026

Please join us! SOUTHERN NEVADA

*All meetings are scheduled to be held at 11:30 a.m. at
Summerlin Hospital. Lunch will be served.*

- Wednesday, February 11, 2026
- Wednesday, April 29, 2026
- Wednesday, July 29, 2026
- Wednesday, November 4, 2026

NORTHERN NEVADA

All are set for 5 pm for meet & greet; Meeting starts at 5:30 pm.

- Thursday, February 12, 2026 at NNMC Sparks Medical Office Building, Suite 201
- Thursday, April 30, 2026 at NNMC Sparks Medical Office Building, Suite 201
- Thursday, July 30, 2026 at Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center (1600 Medical Parkway, Carson City) Main Hospital – Valley View Room on the 3rd floor
- Thursday, November 5, 2026 – NNMC Sparks Medical Office Building, Suite 201

Loyalty Matters

There are a number of practices, as well as management and staff, who have been with Silver State ACO for a very long time, some even since the very beginning. We appreciate them and certainly hope that they appreciate the benefits they have gained from being part of this effective and successful team.



Nevada Cardiology, Silver State ACO Participant since 2014



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From Left:
Linn Billingsley,
Scion Health,
SSACO Board
Member;
Larry Preston,
CEO - Silver
State ACO;
Karla Perez VP
The Valley
Health System,
SSACO Board
Member



Proud sponsor of the Northern Nevada Women's Leadership Breakfast, September 18, 2025 at the Atlantis Hotel in Reno

SILVER STATE ACO Compliance Line

702-751-0834

Available for secure reporting of any suspected compliance issues, without
fear of retribution.

*For a chance to be entered into a raffle at the next practice meeting, respond to this email with
"I read to the very end" in the subject line.*

To cancel receiving the monthly Silver State ACO Newsletter please respond with "Unsubscribe" in the subject box

