

# Credentialing Resource Center Journal

Volume 22  
Issue No. 5

**MAY 2013**

## **NAMSS PASS provides a universal database for tracking affiliation history**

Imagine if you could access a physician's entire affiliation history—including letters of good standing and additional affiliation information—through a single database. The National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) felt it was high time such a database was developed, and released the result of its efforts earlier this year. The NAMSS Practitioner Affiliation Sharing Source (NAMSS PASS™) went live on February 1, after a pilot period that kicked off in September 2012 at the NAMSS Annual Conference. The NAMSS PASS offers MSPs instant access to a practitioner's affiliation history, as provided by those healthcare facilities. **Credentialing Resource Center Journal** caught up with **Constance Riedel, BS, CPMSM, CPCS**, 2013 immediate past president of NAMSS, to find out more about this innovative tool.

### **Primary-sourced information at your fingertips**

"The best part about NAMSS PASS is the fact that it is a national database of practitioner affiliation history," says Riedel, who is the director of the medical staff services department at Elliot Hospital in Manchester, N.H. "It's something that will be available at people's fingertips."

She adds that in addition to providing important affiliation information, NAMSS PASS helps MSPs quickly perform a gap analysis and identify credentialing red flags in a practitioner's application. Riedel says that NAMSS PASS came about after many years of discussing the ideal credentialing solution. NAMSS identified 13 criteria necessary to create such a solution (see sidebar on p. 4), and determined there was no single, universal resource that tracked affiliation history. Thus, the concept of NAMSS PASS was born.

"The difference between what a vendor can do right now and what the NAMSS PASS does is that NAMSS PASS is a one-stop resource for obtaining this information," says Riedel. "With the many credentialing vendors offering we-

bcrawls through their databases, we are excited for the opportunity to work with them to incorporate NAMSS PASS as the search engine. We think this would eliminate the myriad of websites to query, the deluge of follow-up required and the extensive time of figuring out if there are gaps. This would allow the MSP more time to analyze the information itself."

Another aspect setting NAMSS PASS apart is that the information is primary sourced. The affiliation information and letters of good standing are contributed by facilities themselves, rather than provided by the physicians, as is the case with other databases. Riedel notes that several MSPs, as well as attorneys from the law firm Horty, Springer & Mattern, assisted with the developmental phases of NAMSS PASS, and the product went through extensive vetting prior to its release. Now that NAMSS PASS has been rolled out, NAMSS is encouraging hospitals, surgery centers, physician

practices, and other healthcare organizations to upload their data. Any information regarding a practitioner's affiliation history is pertinent.

"Ultimately, the success depends on everyone to upload their information," says Riedel. "If you want to query a practitioner's background, you'll want to gather as much information as you can. As MSPs, we have a tremendous responsibility to advocate for patient safety by holding ourselves and our practitioners to the highest standards."

### Help NAMSS PASS help you

Riedel believes that the database will be advantageous for many groups within the healthcare realm.

"It will be beneficial to healthcare attorneys who represent hospitals and physician leaders because this will help reduce the risk of negligent credentialing. It will be beneficial to the physicians themselves because it will help to reduce the time that it takes to onboard a physician," Riedel says. She indicates that MSPs will enjoy a reduction in time as well as cost when it comes to processing applications. "However, most importantly, this will help us to ensure patient safety by providing full transparency of a practitioner's history", Riedel added. Healthcare entities can become contributors and add practitioner information to the NAMSS PASS database at no cost; Riedel and her colleagues hope this will encourage MSPs and other credentialing experts to use and populate the database. "For the year of 2013, we're offering a free gap analysis, so if someone wants to go in and verify a physician's affiliation history, it will be free of charge," says Riedel. "After that, there will be very nominal fees based on a subscription and the size of the facility."

Logging on to the database is easy--users simply visit the NAMSS website ([www.namss.org](http://www.namss.org)) and click on a banner across the top of the page that will direct them to the NAMSS PASS section of the site. Users can register on the first visit and then begin entering practitioner information. Since NAMSS PASS is a secure online database rather than a software program, MSPs can access the information by logging in from any computer with an Internet connection. To search for affiliation history, users simply enter a practitioner's name and National Provider Identifier number. Riedel notes that it may take some time for the database to become

## The ideal credentialing solution

For the past several years, the National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) has been working toward solidifying the concept of an ideal credentialing solution as a means of confirming best practices and enhancing patient safety. NAMSS identified the following criteria needed for such a solution:

1. Identity verification
2. Residency and fellowship enrollment/completion dates
3. Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates information
4. Military information
5. Professional licensure held in all states
6. DEA registration and state Department of Public Safety certification
7. Board certification status
8. Practitioner affiliation history
9. Criminal background check
10. Office of Inspector General/General Services Administration/Office of International Education sanctions check
11. NPDB
12. Malpractice carriers
13. Insurance carrier certificates/reports

populated with physician information; she compares the situation to when the NPDB was first established.

“You have to start somewhere,” says Riedel.

“That’s why we’re strongly encouraging everyone to participate, so that we can get a complete history of all the practitioners in the database.” She adds that adding information involves a simple upload from a spreadsheet. NAMSS offers one-on-one demonstrations of NAMSS PASS and will walk users through the process of uploading their information. Riedel notes that facilities will not need to have practitioners sign separate release forms in order to post practitioner information on NAMSS PASS; the release forms facilities currently use to allow MSPs to query information on a practitioner are sufficient.

“They don’t have to change their bylaws, they don’t have to change their applications, and they don’t have to change their release forms in order to access this information or provide this information, because it’s something we currently do now,” Riedel says.

### Standardizing data and promoting best practices

Beyond providing MSPs and other credentialing professionals with a one-stop system for obtaining practitioners’ affiliation histories, NAMSS PASS will make it possible to standardize affiliation letters and other documents for the credentialing community. NAMSS has already developed a best practice affiliation letter for use in the database. Users will also be able to print out “good standing” letters on the letterheads of the contributing hospitals, if a letter for that practitioner is available. This will save MSPs a significant amount of time, since the current process involves mailing or faxing requests to each individual hospital and waiting for responses. Upon noticing a broad range of definitions for the term “good standing,” NAMSS established a national definition to create a common understanding of the term and promote best practice. “I think it raises the national credentialing standard,” says Riedel of the

standardization efforts. “The good standing definition that we’re using is based on the definition provided by the Health Care Quality Improvement Act.”

According to the NAMSS definition, good standing means that no adverse professional review action has been taken regarding a practitioner. More specifically, it means that neither the practitioner’s staff membership nor clinical privileges have been reduced, restricted, suspended, revoked, denied, or not renewed. Additionally, NAMSS defines “restricted” as having a mandatory concurring consultation requirement imposed upon the practitioner. By standardizing these terms and providing common forms within the database, NAMSS hopes to create an efficient verification process and unite the credentialing community. According to Riedel, the response to NAMSS PASS has been extremely positive. “We’ve had a lot of support since the time we rolled this out at the NAMSS conference last fall,” she says.

**Sally Pelletier, CPMSM, CPCS**, director and senior consultant for The Greeley Company in Danvers, Mass., offers the following statement regarding the NAMSS PASS initiative: “The Greeley Company developed ‘The Evolving Credentialing Standard’ several years ago, in response to industry concerns regarding incomplete and deficient credentialing practices that allow substandard practitioners to obtain hospital privileges. The Evolving Credentialing Standard—nationally known as a leading practice credentialing process—recognizes that all healthcare-related employment and appointment history should be obtained as a part of a comprehensive verification process. This aligns with NAMSS PASS, which, when fully implemented, will provide a single source for a practitioner’s healthcare work history.”

The database’s success relies on the participation and support of all healthcare organizations. With this, NAMSS PASS will become a comprehensive database of primary source information and prove invaluable for MSPs and other credentialing professionals. ■