Frequently Asked Questions

About NAMSS PASS

What is the NAMSS Practitioner Affiliation Sharing Source – ("NAMSS PASS")?

NAMSS PASS is a secure, on-line database that provides you with quick, easy, and inexpensive access to the affiliation history for the practitioners you credential. With your help and support, it will be a comprehensive, centralized, primary source database. It will contain practitioners' affiliation history with hospitals, surgery centers, health plans, group medical practices, and other Health Care Entities (HCEs) for the entirety of the practitioners' careers – all available at the touch of a button! NAMSS PASS was created through the collaborative efforts of NAMSS and the Practitioner Hospital Data Bank (PHDB).

What exactly will NAMSS PASS permit me to do?

 A NAMSS PASS subscriber will be able to easily and quickly do the following:

- Contribute affiliation information to the sharing source database at no cost.
- Browse practitioners and health care entities (HCE) at no cost.
- Instantaneously obtain a detailed practitioner's affiliation history for all of the Health Care Entities (HCEs) where he or she has been credentialed, as reported by those HCEs;
- Compare and contrast the NAMSS PASS affiliation information with the information provided on the application form;
- Perform a quick "gap analysis" regarding practitioners to determine if any credentialing red flags are present; and
- Immediately print "good standing" letters from any one of the contributing hospitals, if a letter for that practitioner is available. This means no more faxing or mailing requests to individual affiliations, no more waiting for responses to be returned, and no need for second and third requests for verification!

What quality of care issue does NAMSS PASS solve and why is it so important to our industry?

A serious issue currently experienced by MSPs all over the country is the lack of full disclosure by practitioner applicants regarding their affiliation history. These "gaps" of affiliation can pose an enormous risk to your patients, facility, and community and NAMSS PASS will help by providing a complete history of practitioners' affiliations as self-reported by health care entities. This eliminates the reliance on only the applicants' information.

As Medical Services Professionals, patient safety is our primary responsibility. As the experts in credentialing, we must establish industry best practices to both promote quality care and mitigate potential risks associated with the practitioners we are considering for credentials. At the same time, given the economic climate facing all of our institutions, we must also use our expertise to perform our

patient safety responsibilities in the most efficient and effective manner possible. NAMSS PASS is an important new tool that permits us to accomplish all of these goals and objectives.

Getting Started/Approvals

How do I get started?

Visit the NAMSS website at www.namss.org and click on the NAMSS PASS link. If you are already a NAMSS member, your NAMSS username and password will grant you access to the system. If you are not a member, you will be asked to provide some basic contact information before gaining access to the database. You need not be a NAMSS member to participate, but members will receive deep discounts on user fees.

Once you are registered with the system, you will be asked to agree to the NAMSS PASS Terms of Service. In addition, if you are a Contributing Entity, you will be required to select one of two "good standing" letter options to be used along with the practitioner information you provide. In terms of actually submitting your information, you will simply need to create an Excel file that contains the data about the practitioners at your facility and then easily upload it to the NAMSS PASS website. You can add additional users from your facility at no additional cost.

Do I need to change my organization's bylaws and/or request additional releases from our practitioners?

The answer very simply is NO. Participating in the NAMSS PASS does not require a change to your organizations bylaws or releases. The NAMSS PASS is a tool to streamline and improve the process of verifying affiliation history; it does not change the information already being shared between organiziations. Regarding practitioner consent, 99% of all practitioner application forms we've reviewed contain a Release, Disclosure, and Acknowledgement section with language that states the practitioner gives consent for the hospital to retrieve as well as disclose their information as a part of the credentialing and recredentialing process. In other words, you already have their permission when they applied for privileges at your facility so you don't need to obtain it again. If your application does not have this language, then you should add it. Additionally, all users attest that they have these releases on file as a part of their agreement to the NAMSS PASS Terms of Service. Also, the practitioner data set is comprised of publically available information such as name, NPI number, state license number, etc. There is no information deemed confidential or PHI (as defined by HIPAA) that would cause a legal concern.

Data Requirements and Availability

How can I find out what other institutions are participating?

You can view a complete list of contributing entities on the NAMSS website under NAMSS PASS resources.

How is it possible for NAMSS to accumulate this data?

This Sharing Source is possible because of committed credentialing professionals from across the country. Our data is comprised of self-reported primary source affiliation history from health care facilities nationwide. For this resource to be most effective and helpful, it is critically important that every Health Care Entity (HCE) contribute its information for the good of the whole credentialing community. This is a tremendous opportunity for everyone in our industry to make a tangible difference in improving the safety and quality of care provided to patients everywhere. There is no cost to contribute data.

How can I be sure that the data I'm viewing is current?

One of the requirements of the Terms of Service is for a Health Care Entity (HCE) to agree to keep its practitioner affiliation information current by submitting periodic electronic updates. We recommend that data be updated monthly by all Contributing Entities. In addition, when you query, a date stamp will appear documenting and verifying the exact date when the data was last updated by the Contributing Entity.

How often are facilities updating records?

We request that facilities update their records every time there is a change in their medical staff status. Normally, that happens after every MEC meeting but the frequencies of those meetings vary. A facility can update their information at any time and the change is instantaneous. If a facility has not updated their information for more than 30 days, a reminder will be automatically sent to them. If their information is over six months old, their information will become inactive.

What are the requirements for uploading data?

NAMSS encourages all contributing entities to update data every 30 days, or more frequently as there are changes in a practitioner's status. To create the most comprehensive gap analysis for each practitioner, contributing entities should upload affiliation data for both currently credentialed and past practitioners.

Can a CVO be added to the NAMSS PASS without an NPI number?

Yes. The Tax ID and NPI numbers are used to help prevent the creation of duplicate Healthcare Entities, which causes Billing confusion later. If you don't have one or the other, it's not a required field.

With so many practitioners with the same name, how do we tell which one is which, if no NPI is listed for some on the list?

We also list their State License number and specialty as additional identifying information and some hospitals will provide a photo as well. In the rare cases where you cannot distinguish the practitioner, it is best to contact the facility directly.

Are any other entity types other than hospitals submitting practitioner info (i.e. community health centers, managed care groups etc)?

Yes. We encourage any healthcare entity to contribute data from their organization. It will help users to analyze the history of practitioners' affiliations with any health organization. It includes, but is not limited to hospitals, surgery centers, medical centers, teaching institutions, managed care organizations, health systems, medical groups, telemedicine groups, behavioral health companies, and locum tenens companies.

What if a status of a practitioner changes at the facility soon after we print a good standing letter from NAMSS PASS for that facility? How will we know?

The accuracy of the data is controlled by each facility which is no different than those facilities responding to your requests by fax or email. Each letter will contain the Last Update Date from that facility and the date you printed the letter. NAMSS PASS tracks all queries with Date/Time stamps and unique Query Confirmation numbers. Future plans include addition of a notification service that alerts subscribers of changes to practitioners whom they have queried previously at other hospitals.

Can my facility query the NAMSS PASS without contributing our data?

Yes. The NAMSS PASS is available for all credentialing professionals to use, regardless of whether or not you contribute data. We strongly urge you to contribute because your peers have committed their time and resource to help you with your quality of care and increase your efficiency; it is only professional courtesy to reciprocate, especially because there is no cost to contribute data.

How are you going to get people to put information into the data base if it is voluntary?

That is our biggest challenge. Because this is voluntary, we need assistance from the entire MSP community to support this initiative by becoming contributing entities themselves and then promoting the benefits of this information sharing source to all their peers, locally and nationally. We firmly believe the benefits of improved patient care quality, reduction of negligent credentialing risks, and major improvement in MSP productivity will be the driving forces behind this community initiative.

Does PASS want us to put the renewal date on the letter or just keep them as "Present?"

This depends on how your system can output the data. Some systems only have the Recredentialing Date (in the future) and some say "Current" or "Present" or some leave it blank. The user will know when they see the display. It's up to you.

If we edit only one practitioner's information, do we need to submit a new spreadsheet for that practitioner only or a complete spreadsheet?

In its current state, NAMSS PASS will require you to submit a complete updated spreadsheet, even if only one practitioner's information changed. The system will detect if there are any changes to every one of your records.

Good Standing (Definition/Letters)

How does NAMSS PASS define "good standing"?

One of the long-standing problems within our profession has been the lack of a common definition of what constitutes "good standing" for the practitioners we credential. Ask 10 Medical Services Professionals what it means and you are likely to get 10 different variations on the theme. We all want "good standing" letters, but we have never developed a common understanding of what that means – until now!

As part of this new industry best practice tool, and through the combined efforts of highly experienced medical services professionals on the NAMSS Board along with one of the leading healthcare law firms in the nation (Horty, Springer & Mattern,) NAMSS PASS has developed two options for a health care entity to choose from in terms of a "good standing" letter. Both of these options rely, in large part, on the well-known federal Health Care Quality Improvement Act to provide us with a common definition, a common understanding of what is intended by the words "good standing." Using a common definition, we will all finally now know what "good standing" means and, just as importantly, what it does not mean!   If additional information about a practitioner's qualifications is required beyond the common definition, you can obtain it through the questions on your application forms, follow-up letters to the health care facilities, confidential evaluation forms sent to references, and/or phone calls to references. Please feel free to download the two letter templates from the NAMSS.org website.

How will I know if a "good standing" letter is available for a practitioner?

When searching for a practitioner, a "Print Letter" icon appears next to each health care affiliation. If a letter exists, the letter will appear when clicking on that icon. When a letter does not exist, a message will appear stating that a good standing letter is not available and to contact the facility for more information. It is important to note that you will not be charged for clicking the "Print Letter" icon if a good standing letter does not exist.

If a practitioner does not have a "good standing" letter available for a particular entity on the NAMSS PASS system, does that mean there is a problem with that practitioner?

The short answer to this question is "no!" There may be several reasons why a "good standing" letter is not available, which may have no relevance to a practitioner's specific qualifications. The absence of a good standing letter on the NAMSS PASS system simply means that you need to contact the facility directly to ascertain why that is the case.

If I am submitting all of my practitioners' to NAMSS PASS, how do I suppress the printing of a good standing letter for the select few practitioners and how will a user know that a letter is not available?

Within the data file, you assign a letter designation of 0,1, or 2. 0 means No Letter, 1 means Letter 1, and 2 means Letter 2. If someone selects Print Letter on your record with a letter value of 0, the system responds back saying "Letter is not available for this practitioner for this facility. Please contact the facility directly at xxx-xxx-xxxx."

Can my facility submit its own response letter?

No. There are two good standing letter options that are standard for all NAMSS PASS users. These two templates were developed by highly experienced Medical Staff Professionals on the NAMSS Board of Directors along with one of the leading healthcare law firms in the country; Horty, Springer, and Mattern. The reason for standardization is to set a concrete definition of what "good standing" means.

Do the good standing letters meet primary source verification requirements as defined by TJC and other accreditation agencies?

Yes. All the information is self-reported by each healthcare entity and the Terms of Service assigns NAMSS PASS as the primary source agent of the entity's information.

Software Compatibility

Can my current credentialing software export affiliation date into the NAMSS PASS?

Most popular credentialing software already has a simple data export feature that allows you to create the Excel file easily. The data fields are few and simple and normally you should not need assistance from the vendor or your IT staff to create this Excel file.

Is NAMSS PASS compatible with standard credentialing software in the industry? How does it differ?

NAMSS PASS is not credentialing software. It is a centralized data repository of primary source practitioner affiliation information. A custom feature (at an additional cost) can be added to your subscription so that your existing credentialing software can interface with the NAMSS PASS data through an Application Programming Interface (API) and automatically query the database as needed. This API should work with any credentialing software that you may have, but it requires the software vendor to offer this interface for their product. Please contact us for more information.

We already purchased a web-based letter response system and we don't want to pay for another one. Why should we contribute data to the NAMSS PASS for others to print our letters when we already have that feature in our system?

NAMSS is not asking you to stop using the software you already purchased. The solution addressed by NAMSS PASS is not that same as your letter response software. You are welcome to continue using it if you want along with NAMSS PASS. The primary goal of NAMSS PASS is to aggregate a comprehensive centralized database of practitioner affiliation history so that the MSP community can rely on this information to identify any red flags where gaps in history exist, but are not disclosed by practitioner applicants. The letter printing feature is just an added convenience for the querying user and you are not paying for that, the user does. There is no charge to contribute your data to the NAMSS PASS database for the benefit of the MSP community.

Fees

Can you search for a practitioner to see if there are any letters available without a fee? In other words, are fees only charged when a letter is received?

Yes. With the Basic Service, you can browse the database at no charge but when you want to print a letter, you need to purchase Letter Credits. The prompts on the screen are simple and self-explanatory.

Is there a cost to query the NAMSS PASS and what forms of payment are accepted?

Yes. Please refer to the Fee Schedule for the Gap Analysis Subscription and the Letter Printing service. The fees are significantly lower for Contributing Entities and NAMSS members.

Are there fees to gain access to the NAMSS PASS database and what forms of payment are accepted?

Basic Service is free of charge to all Health Care Entities (HCE). This includes contributing affiliation data to NAMSS PASS database, creating user accounts, and browsing basic practitioner information in the database. If you wish to retrieve Gap Analysis details and print Good Standing letters from other facilities, there is an access fee based on the number of active current credentialed practitioners at your HCE. However, in 2013 the Gap Analysis data access will be available free to all registered NAMSS PASS users. All entities (contributing and non-contributing) can pay a fee to print affiliation letters. All entities will receive three (3) free letter credits in 2013. NAMSS members receive deep discounts on all fees. Please refer to the Fee Schedule on the NAMSS website for details.

Fees are payable by major credit cards or company check (minimum required).

If I am a NAMSS member but my staff is not, do they log in under my NAMSS password?

For security reasons, each user must have their own unique User ID. There is no extra cost to have additional users on your account. They can create a NAMSS "Guest Account" on the NAMSS website to get access to NAMSS PASS. You must add them as Users under your Account so when they create their verified account on NAMSS PASS, it automatically links them to your Healthcare Entity.