

DEFINING  
**TOMORROW'S  
MSP<sup>®</sup>:**

The Future of the Medical  
Services Profession

**October 2021**

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TomorrowsMSP](http://www.namss.org/TomorrowsMSP)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**A**s key members of their health care organization (HCO) leadership teams, Medical Services Professionals (MSPs) assist the medical staff and other HCO medical staff leadership with core functions such as peer review, performance improvement and the credentialing and privileging of healthcare providers.

The National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) articulates and supports the critical role MSPs play as the gatekeepers of patient safety, and seeks to keep them at the forefront of this important role. With the introduction of new technologies and healthcare delivery models, the role of the MSP continues to evolve.

In 2019, believing in the longevity, importance, and relevance of the MSP profession, NAMSS set out to review and redefine the roles and responsibilities of MSPs in order to:

1. Better understand their current and imminent needs;
2. Work to identify the new knowledge and skills required to ensure their relevancy in this ever-changing healthcare environment.

NAMSS partnered with FMP Consulting to conduct an assessment to validate the current competencies needed by MSPs and to identify the direction and future focus areas for the medical services profession. Through an in-depth assessment of the current landscape, NAMSS strived to:

1. Identify how the MSP landscape has changed in the last 5 years as well as provide insights into changes coming in the next 3-5 years;
2. Validate the current and future competencies needed by MSPs;
3. Determine the gaps between the current state and future state; and
4. Develop training and education recommendations to close the gaps.

Since completing the assessment, the MSP landscape transformed faster than anyone anticipated as the world battled the global coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19. The valuable work MSPs do each and every day came to the forefront as HCOs pivoted the care they provided to combat the spread of the virus.

As the world and HCOs digitized and adapted to meet new patient needs, one message rang clear, MSPs are vital members of HCOs as strategic leaders and gatekeepers of patient safety.

In Spring 2021, NAMSS conducted a pulse survey to its membership to identify how responsibilities for the MSP have evolved as well as drivers of change now and in the future for the profession.

The MSP of tomorrow is up for the challenge, ready to take on more responsibilities and ready to make an impact.

# BACKGROUND

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In October 2013, NAMSS initially contracted with FMP Consulting to conduct a competency assessment in order to define the role of the Medical Services Professional (MSP). This competency assessment consisted of a review of job tasks conducted for the Certified Provider Credentialing Specialist (CPCS) and Certified Professional Medical Services Management (CPMSM) examinations, focus groups with senior NAMSS members, and competency validation surveys. This work was completed to identify the core functions of MSPs across the healthcare industry; stress the essential roles of, and responsibilities performed by, MSPs; provide context for career advancement in the profession; and set a clear direction for the future of MSPs as healthcare evolves. These findings were published by NAMSS in 2016 in the State of the Medical Services Profession report.

Over the past few years, swift changes within the healthcare landscape have altered the roles and responsibilities of

MSPs, how they perform their duties, and the leadership and technological skills required to do so. For this reason, NAMSS undertook a re-evaluation of the state of the profession in 2019 with the goal of determining how the role of the MSP had changed and evolved since the initial report. It also sought to identify additional competencies and skills now required to insure that MSPs are able to prosper within an ever-changing environment and for the foreseeable future of the profession.

NAMSS conducted a pulse survey in the spring of 2021 to see how the roles and responsibilities of the MSP have evolved in the past 18 months. The survey looked to compare current data against metrics from 2019 as well as address how MSPs perceive the future of their profession – on the individual level and as a whole.

# OVERVIEW

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With the integration of technology throughout the healthcare industry, Medical Services Professionals (MSPs) must move into a digital-forward age. Technology now redefines how we access information, the speed at which MSPs function, and how they conduct day-to-day activities. From our research, it is clear that new core competencies are required in order for Tomorrow's MSP® to succeed in this continuously changing landscape. These core competencies build on, but do not replace, those outlined in the first State of the Medical Services Profession Report.

Changes to the healthcare environment, inclusive of disaster preparedness, hospital closings, system consolidations, centralization of functions, technology, and artificial intelligence, are affecting the nature of the work that MSPs do and how they perform their fundamental tasks. In order to remain relevant, there is a pressing need for professional evolution. In addition to the increased workload, changes to their work to adapt to new responsibilities, medical services departments also were impacted by a new way of doing their job – remotely.

The MSP of tomorrow quickly became the MSP of today, adapting to digitization, technology shifts, and more.

More than ever, MSPs were an integral part of the HCO leadership team. Tomorrow's MSP® must be ready to innovate and adapt to new responsibilities, motivated to expand their knowledge, willing to adapt in an age of technological advancement, and focused on the future of the profession.

Education and knowledge on topics such as medical staff governance, enterprise risk management, organizational operations and financial performance, project management, critical thinking, data analysis and the ability to lead teams are among the essential skills MSPs need to be successful and demonstrate their value.

Through a new competency model and the introduction of new tools, programs, and resources, Tomorrow's MSP® will be well-equipped to not only adapt to the impending revolution of the profession, but to be a catalyst of it – while continuing their valuable role as Gatekeepers of Patient Safety.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF MSPs

- Credentialing and re-credentialing of all practitioners.
- Maintaining numerous practitioner data repositories, including education training, experience, and licensure.
- Critically analyzing data to create informed recommendations for credentialing, re-credentialing, and privileging proceedings.
- Maintaining an accredited continuing medical education (CME) program and providing CME for physicians and advanced practice professionals to maintain their clinical competency.
- Reviewing and implementing various federal rulings and accrediting body standards pertaining to the functions of the medical staff, advanced practice providers, and/or allied health staff.
- Establishing systems to facilitate meetings and communication between practitioners, both within and outside their specialties, as well as with a hospital's administration.
- Developing, establishing, and enforcing of medical staff bylaws, rules and regulations, and policies that govern the activities of the medical staff and networking providers.
- Enrolling and maintaining practitioners in federal, state, and healthcare insurance networks.
- Contract development and management including review and approval with contractor, legal and Administration.
- Communication, improvement and education of practitioners regarding findings on satisfaction surveys, performance results, and other quality metrics.
- Managing the self-governing organized medical staff.

*As defined by NAMSS*

**TOMORROW'S MSP®** must be ready to **INNOVATE** and **ADAPT** to new responsibilities, motivated to **EXPAND THEIR KNOWLEDGE**, **WILLING TO ADAPT** in an age of technological advancement, and focused on the **FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION.**

# CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE PROFESSION

Medical Services Professionals (MSPs) were asked to evaluate 65 tasks and responsibilities to determine which best represent the duties, functions, and tasks they handle at all levels and years of experience. Of the 65 tasks and responsibilities, 10 core functions emerged.

MSPs must continue to acquire new technical knowledge and skills in order to meet industry needs, inclusive of the ability to analyze and manage data and manage the provider enrollment process. These core functions will grow in importance as MSPs develop strategic action plans to address potential disasters or scenarios that could impact their day-to-day responsibilities.

2020 demonstrated that one core functional area cannot be overlooked in order for MSPs to be prepared for tomorrow, whatever challenges it may entail.

In the latest research, NAMSS members evaluated the current ten core functions as they relate to their present role as well as in the next five years. Findings revealed that all core functional areas are still important to the role of MSPs, with some competencies coming to the forefront as being essential during disaster preparedness, such as while battling the global pandemic, COVID-19.

## CORE FUNCTIONAL AREAS

### **Manages Provider Enrollment Process**

Example: Maintains provider enrollment information within the credentialing database and pulls reports for hospital administration, marketing, professional billing staff, and clinic directors/managers as needed.

### **Analyzes and Manages Data Verification\***

Example: Identifies associations between seemingly independent problems or events to recognize trends, problems, and possible cause-effect relationships.

### **Manages the Credentialing or Privileging Process**

Example: Evaluates credentialing/privileging requests and evidence of education, training, and experience to determine eligibility for requested privileges, membership, and/or plan participation.

### **Conducts, Participates In, and Maintains Credentialing and Privileging\***

Example: Compiles, evaluates, and presents the practitioner-specific data collected for review by one or more.

### **Conducts, Participates In, and Maintains Current Clinical Competency Evaluations and Peer Reviews**

Example: Recognizes, investigates, and validates discrepancies and adverse information obtained.

### **Complies with Accreditation Standards and Regulatory Standards\***

Examples: 1). Participates in surveys and audits of regulatory and accreditation agencies or organizations. 2). Obtains and evaluates practitioner sanctions, complaints, and adverse data to ensure compliance.

### **Manages Compliance with State and Federal Accreditation Standards and Regulatory Requirements**

Example: Develops and/or updates applicable governing documents (bylaws, rules and regulations/policies and procedures) that support and direct organizational practices and ensure compliance.

### **Conducts, Participates In, and Maintains Primary Source Verification**

Example: Verifies and documents expirables using acceptable verification sources to ensure compliance with accreditation and regulatory standards.

### **Manages Departmental Operations**

Example: Verifies and documents expirables using acceptable verification sources to ensure compliance with accreditation and regulatory standards.

### **Facilitates Medical Staff Functions**

Example: Collaborates with executive teams to integrate operational needs into strategic planning processes and promotes practitioner advocacy, departmental effectiveness, and regulatory readiness.

*Based on 2019 survey data of current MSPs and 2021 survey of NAMSS members.*

*\*Of particularly high importance during COVID-19.*

# SKILLSETS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

As the healthcare industry continues to change, so do the expectations of Medical Services Professionals (MSPs). While today's MSPs possess the competencies needed to perform their jobs in the current state, Tomorrow's MSPs® will need to acquire new knowledge and skills in order to perform the responsibilities of their expanded duties. The research put forth in this report indicated that overall, as MSPs move through their careers, more competencies are deemed very essential. Through this analysis, results indicated that skills pertaining to building relationships, communications, and understanding the MSP role are areas

of focus for more novice MSPs, while areas pertaining to governance, management, political savvy, and team building are expected at the expert level.

With more organizations transitioning to a digitized work environment—from databases to remote workforces—MSPs' roles expanded to account for remote processing, managing remote employees, and overall medical staff professionalism and wellness. With this, NAMSS identified new skillsets that are essential to MSPs moving into the future.

## SKILLSETS FOR JOB FUNCTION

This chart identifies the skillsets that are essential and very essential to job performance by years of experience. It also illustrates that in order for an MSP to advance to the next level, specific essential skillsets need to be mastered as they become very essential as an MSP progresses in their career. These are listed in levels of importance as MSPs advance in their careers.

● Very Essential    ● Essential

Skillssets	0-4 Years	5-14 Years	15-24 Years	25+ Years
Analytical Thinking	●	●	●	●
Budget/Finance	●	●	●	●
Change Management	●	●	●	●
Clinical Competence	●	●	●	●
Communication	●	●	●	●
Confidentiality	●	●	●	●
Contracting	●	●	●	●
Evaluation	●	●	●	●
Flexibility/Adaptability	●	●	●	●
Human Resources	●	●	●	●
Information Technology	●	●	●	●
Legal	●	●	●	●
Managed Care	●	●	●	●
Performance Improvement	●	●	●	●
Political Savvy	●	●	●	●
Presentation Skills	●	●	●	●
Professional Ethics	●	●	●	●
Professional Presence	●	●	●	●
Project Management	●	●	●	●
Quality Review/Quality	●	●	●	●
Relationship Building	●	●	●	●
Risk Management	●	●	●	●
Team Building	●	●	●	●
Database Management <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●
Medical Staff Professionalism <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●
Medical Staff Wellness <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●
Continuing Medical Education <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●
Medical Staff Bylaws & Policies/Procedures <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●
Remote People Management <b>NEW</b>	●	●	●	●

\*Skills required based on 2019 survey data of current MSPs and 2021 pulse survey.

# DRIVERS OF CHANGE

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While the global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) accelerated adaption, technology, remote process, and remote people management were the largest drivers of change specific to Medical Services Professionals (MSPs) as noted by NAMSS members. This came as more MSPs adjusted to different work environments, ways of communicating with internal and external stakeholders, and performing their roles and responsibilities in an entirely different way.

All ten core functional areas identified in past research are still considered valid by NAMSS members, yet the weight placed on each has shifted. MSPs' abilities to comply with accreditation standards and regulatory standards, as well as manage the compliance with state and federal accreditation standards and regulatory, were deemed of high importance given the unique circumstances presented by the pandemic.

# THE PROFESSION IN DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

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While there are various differences between the organizational settings in which Medical Services Professionals (MSPs) work, data was analyzed for differences between four work settings – hospital, credentialing verification organization (CVO), Catch-All (vendor, MSP staffing agency, consultant), and Managed Care Organization (MCO) – and strongly validated that the same core functions are essential to the MSP, no matter the work setting. While these functional areas of work may require different levels of proficiency, the core functions themselves remain the same across all workplaces, indicating that the same competencies and interpersonal and soft skills are required in order for MSPs to be successful in their jobs.

# PROFESSIONAL GOALS OF THE MSP

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In looking to the future, MSPs are interested in advancing their own careers and setting professional goals. MSPs newer in their career are seeking ways to learn and grow within their career and expand their knowledge within their roles and the profession. They are seeking ways to validate their skillsets via industry certifications. Those with ten or more years of experience are seeking opportunities to enhance their leadership skills and ability to adapt and be flexible leaders within the profession.



# FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

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The healthcare landscape is transforming. Innovations in virtual healthcare, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence are not only impacting the type of care patients receive and how physicians provide it, but also how the role of the MSP is changing in order to adopt and operationalize new processes and become more innovative in the way they perform their duties.

More than every anticipated, MSPs have quickly acclimated to changes brought on by the pandemic — implementing new technology and innovation, and adapting to and learning new skills in order to remain relevant in their roles — to continue performing their vital service as gatekeepers of patient safety.

These rapid changes showcased a need within the profession for MSPs to be prepared for the challenges of the future, from opening a new hospital to weathering disasters. MSPs are committed and ready to face these changes with a reinvigorated commitment to being the gatekeepers of patient safety, and with a focus on their own professional growth and advancement. By placing emphasis on the outlined core competencies, MSPs will possess the tools to handle forthcoming technological advancements and will be better suited to serve as the drivers of change, while elevating their role in their organizations.

As healthcare organizations continue to shift, MSPs are adapting to the changing landscape, and doing more than ever before. With the trend toward centralization, automation and digitization, MSPs will need to remain vigilant, familiarizing themselves with new technologies, and understanding new ideologies in order to advance the profession and remain key leaders within the organization. To become the MSPs of tomorrow, today's MSPs must acknowledge these drivers of change and embrace the evolution of the profession in order to survive, succeed, and grow.

**Tomorrow's MSP® starts TODAY.**

*Tomorrow's MSP® is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as a service mark of National Association Medical Staff Services.*



## ABOUT NAMSS

The National Association Medical Staff Services (NAMSS) is dedicated to enhancing the professional development of and recognition for professionals in the medical services profession and credentialing services field. NAMSS' vision is to advance a healthcare environment that maximizes the patient experience through the delivery of quality services. The NAMSS membership includes more than 5,600 medical services professionals from medical group practices, hospitals, managed care organizations, and CVOs.

For more information visit [www.namss.org](http://www.namss.org) or call (202) 367-1196.

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## NAMSS TASKFORCE

With the cooperative efforts of the individuals listed below, NAMSS was able to create the following document reflecting the state of the medical services profession. Thank you for your efforts.

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