Credentialing Resource Center Journal

Profile: The 2018 CRC Medical Staff Professional of the Year

A love of laws, regulations, and patient safety has led to a successful career for this MSP

Cassie L. Kana, CPMSM, CPCS
Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage

Editor's note: This profile is part of the special 2018 CRC contest coverage, a collaboration between ***Credentialing Resource Center Journal****,* ***Medical Staff Briefing****, and* ***Credentialing Resource Center Daily****. Check back in throughout Winners' Week to learn more about this year's CRC Achievement Awards and CRC Symposium Case Study Competition winners.*

MSP of the Year_Cassie Kana_carousel.jpg

Like most who go into medical staff services, **Cassie L. Kana, CPMSM, CPCS,** didn't know what the field entailed until she got into it. But it didn't take her long to realize that she had found the right career.

"I immediately knew medical staff services was for me because I appreciated the dedication to patient safety; plus, I have a love of law and regulations, which there are plenty of [in this field]," explains Kana, who is the medical staff operations coordinator at Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage.

Her dedication to medical staff services and patient safety led to Kana being named the 2018 Credentialing Resource Center (CRC) Medical Staff Professional of the Year. Kana was honored in February at the 2018 CRC Symposium in Las Vegas.

Natali Henry, medical staff coordinator at Providence Alaska Medical Center, who nominated Kana, says Kana spends her time teaching and helping everyone she comes in contact with—including both MSPs and medical staff leaders.

"She trains new medical staff employees across the region, created a training class for new medical executive committee members, trains our new physician leaders for other committees, and reaches out to other facility departments to see how we can help them," says Henry. "She is a resource for medical staff offices within the Providence system and for the state of Alaska."

Kana's inspiration for training others comes from a Henry Ford quote posted in her team's office: "Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

Kana says she wants everyone in her organization to be successful and reach goals together. “Helping others grow their knowledge base is a passion of mine. Learning new things is how we improve ourselves and what we do, and in the long run bettering ourselves is going to impact the care our patients receive.”

One thing Kana tries to teach her colleagues is that MSPs are more than just “paper pushers” or regulatory requirement monitors. “We are here to ensure patients receive care from qualified individuals.”

And after receiving this message loud and clear from Kana, Henry decided she needed to recognize her medical staff colleague.

“The MSO’s work impacts patient safety daily by protecting patients from negligence and encouraging constant performance improvement. [Yet] it’s very behind-the-scenes, silent, unrecognized patient safety work,” says Henry.

Kana started her career at the Health South Sugar Land (Texas) Rehabilitation Hospital in 2008 as an executive assistant and credentialing coordinator. “I started at the front desk of a large physician group and just kept agreeing to learn new things. I ended up handling provider enrollment and then moved over to the hospital side.”

Kana joined Providence Alaska Medical Center in January 2015. Henry says before Kana came to the hospital, the medical staff services department was young and improvised most of its duties. Kana took the time to structure the department’s operations and train all of its personnel to make it successful. She also continues to look for ways to improve processes and to ensure the organization stays up to date on regulations.

“Whenever she sees opportunity to improve, she creates and implements the changes and she facilitates our way through it,” says Henry. “Cassie is dedicated and reliable; her example motivates us to work hard toward patient safety through the medical staff office. She goes above and beyond to make us successful at our job.”

Some of the things that Kana has accomplished in the past three years include helping review and update medical staff bylaws, creating an electronic on-call schedule, creating a peer review database, and decreasing provider onboarding turnaround time.

Kana had less than a week to learn how to build SharePoint sites in order to turn the paper EMTALA schedules into an electronic version. “I was lucky enough to have BriAnn Haley, a prior clinical support technician in the ED, as a credentialer in our office. She worked hand-in-hand with me to create online calendars that would work for the ED.”

The process took a lot of collaboration between medical staff services, the emergency department, department chairs, and individual physician practices. This included retraining over 100 physician offices on the new process. However, it was worth it, according to Henry.

“Now, instead of the emergency room constantly updating paper calendars, having to answer calls from all over the hospital about who is the EMTALA physician, and being responsible for updating call preferences, everybody in the facility has access to the electronic calendars. Even our critical access hospitals can see who is on call at [Providence],” she says.

As for the peer review database, Henry says before its implementation, peer review information was manually typed on multiple forms for a case review, and there was no tracking mechanism for the data.

“Now there is a central database that tracks everything and creates all the necessary letters with one click. It has saved the peer review department an unbelievable amount of time,” says Henry.

To create the database, Kana used Microsoft Access. She worked with the peer review nurses to outline all of the data points they needed, what forms they used, and how to build the database so they could efficiently enter information. She said it took several months of testing, adding data points, and revising documents once they learned the database’s capabilities.

Kana also has worked with her fellow MSPs to make the credentialing process more efficient. According to Henry, this has significantly decreased the time it takes to onboard new providers. “It has improved our department, made the providers and offices happier, and allowed us to focus on the applicant's file instead of pushing paper,” she says.

“I was very impressed with Cassie’s commitment to improving the provider experience and decreasing onboarding turnaround times. Clearly, the implementation of electronic efficiencies brought great strides in securing safe patient outcomes for this organization. Including providers as the champions of process improvement is key to performance excellence,” says **Raechel Rowland, RN, BSN, CLSSBB,** Lean Practitioner at Ascension Borgess Health and 2018 CRC Contest Committee member.

Kana has also relied on medical staff leaders to champion needed medical staff bylaws revisions, another project she undertook after joining Providence Alaska Medical Center.

“Luckily, I love laws and regulations,” says Kana about getting involved in the medical staff bylaws revision. “We have revised our bylaws multiple times in the past few years so it wasn’t overwhelming for the medical staff. I first focused on simple administrative edits, such as how our committees were actually structured, and then moved on to simplifying our medical staff categories.

“Working with our medical staff leadership has been critical in every step of this project, and quite a few of the changes have been driven by them,” she says.

Kana says in order to build great relationships with her medical staff members, she considers them to be her secondary bosses. “We may be employed by the hospital and represent the hospital’s best interest, but we cannot further patient care without working collaboratively with medical staff members. I consider medical staff members as our secondary bosses, and offering them that sort of respect builds great relationships. Above all, we have to remember they’re just normal people and not be intimidated by the initials after their names.”

Henry adds that Kana is always willing to help providers understand the work and support provided by MSPs. “Cassie is passionate and dedicated, which providers notice. She is also reliable, so they know they can come to her. Her customer service is excellent and she takes the time to educate our providers.

“When our providers understand our work, thanks to Cassie’s training and education to them, they collaborate more with us, which makes our lives easier,” says Henry.

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