

Eli's Rehab Report

Reimbursement: Learn The Difference Between NCDs and LCDs Before You Face Claims Denials

If you've ignored the alphabet soup of LCDs versus NCDs thus far, it's time get down to business. These coverage determinations can have different information on them, and you will probably have to check both to get all of the information you need.

"The vast majority of coverage is provided on a local level and developed by clinicians at the contractors' (offices) that pay Medicare claims in the form of local coverage determinations, or LCDs," said **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services'** **Lauren Robbins** during CMS's June 23 webinar, "Medicare Basics, Part Two." "However, in certain cases, Medicare deems it appropriate to develop a national coverage decision, or NCD, for an item or service to be applied on a national basis for all Medicare beneficiaries meeting the criteria for coverage."

An NCD is a national policy that stems from evidence-based determination that a particular item or service is reasonable and necessary. It may be requested by the public or internally generated by CMS and has opportunities for public participation. In some cases, CMS's own research is supplemented by an outside technology assessment and/or consultation with the Medicare evidence development and coverage advisory committee (MEDCAC).

Medicare contractors develop LCDs for their jurisdictions when there is no NCD or when there is a need to further define an NCD. A local policy may consist of two separate documents, the LCD and an associated document. At the end of an LCD that has an associated article, there is a link to the related article and vice versa. All providers should be knowledgeable about Medicare coverage prior to providing services or items to a Medicare beneficiary.

Resource: The searchable Medicare Coverage Database contains all NCDs, LCDs, proposed NCD decisions, national coverage analyses, coding analyses for labs, local articles, MEDCAC proceedings, technology assessments and Medicare coverage guidance documents, Robbins added. You can access it at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database>.