Claiming Medicaid Reimbursement for Specialized Transportation Do's and Don'ts

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Derek Abraham
Vice President of Field Operations, Accelify

Derek Abraham has more than 20 years of experience working with various federal reimbursement programs and is an expert in school-based Medicaid and other federal reimbursement methodologies. During this time he has managed 12 statewide projects that collectively produced hundreds of millions in federal funds for state-level agencies and local school districts.

Derek oversees the Field Operations teams responsible for managing all claiming and related operations within each state Accelify operates in. These responsibilities include providing indepth analysis of the results generated for each of Accelify's school district clients, the resolution of project-specific issues, and Accelify's training programs nationwide.

Derek also plays a leadership role on Accelify's Medicaid Reimbursement Maximization Team. In addition to identifying aspects of clients' programming that might be hampering their ability to generate revenue, Derek has played a key role in client district discussions with state agencies over policy issues. These efforts have led to significant increases in revenue for many Accelify clients nationwide.

Derek Abraham received his BS in Business Administration from the University of Florida.

Presenter Bios

Nanci English
Medicaid Customer Service Analyst, Broward County Public Schools

Nanci English holds a Bachelor's degree in Finance and is currently the Medicaid Customer Service Analyst for The School Board of Broward County. She has worked with the ESE/Student Support Services department for the past 10 years. Nanci works with the electronic management systems to bill Medicaid, trains providers to document their services for compliance and Medicaid billing, works with the Administrative Medicaid Billing program, manages transportation services and provides customer service to ESE and Support Staff.

Madeline Minichiello
Manager, Student Transportation and Fleet Services, Broward County Public Schools

Madeline Minichiello has worked in various roles with Broward County Public Schools for over 32 years. During this time she has held leadership positions in the Information and Technology Department, as well as the Broward County Transportation Systems Department, overseeing Broward County's school bus routing system and Accelify's transportation Medicaid billing systems. She currently oversees the management of those programs for the school district. Madeline is a graduate of Nova Southeastern University.
Agenda

- Overview of Medicaid claiming for Specialized Transportation
- Overcoming the challenges involved in claiming Specialized Transportation services
- Calculating transportation ratios for the transportation cost report
- Ensuring you’re prepared for a transportation claiming audit
- Case Study: Broward County Public Schools

Overview of Transportation Medicaid Claiming

Specialized Transportation services are claimable under the Direct Service and/or Cost Reconciliation program in most states.
Overview of Transportation Medicaid Claiming

How much funding is available to school districts eligible to claim transportation services?

Direct Service Claiming Estimation

- Direct Service Claiming (non-transportation services): $500-$1,000 per Medicaid eligible student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for all claimable services.
- Transportation claiming usually totals 10-15% of overall Direct Service claims.
- A good estimator is the district’s average +/- $60 per IEP student/year.

Transportation services can be claimed when:

- Medicaid Eligibility: Transportation services were provided to Medicaid eligible special education student.
- IEP Authorization: Transportation services were authorized in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Parental Consent: Parental consent to bill Medicaid has been received.
- Direct Health Service/FFS Matching: The student received an IEP authorized direct health service on the day that transportation services were provided and documented and that the health service was claimed.
- Specially Equipped Bus: While definition of “specially equipped bus” differs across states, the requirement is that the student was transported on a specially equipped bus (wheelchair lift, 3-point harness, supine support, bus aide).

Transportation Claiming Challenges
Transportation Claiming Challenges

What are the main challenges that prevent most school districts from claiming transportation?

Capturing Ridership Data (and mileage data where applicable)

1. Vast majority of school districts DO NOT capture daily ridership data on students riding specially-equipped buses.
2. Electronic ridership information systems can be very cost-prohibitive and pose logistical issues to implement, such as:
   a. Cost and maintenance of additional equipment on the bus
   b. Bus/tracking device access to Internet for transferring data
   c. Missing/lost/damaged student RFID cards
   d. Daily updates of student/route assignment information
3. Most manual paper processes to capture ridership data require significant data entry efforts/district resources to manage.
4. Documenting services for aides on buses in states where aides are claimable.

Performing Medicaid Claiming Validations

1. Verifying parental consent to bill Medicaid
2. IEP Authorization for transportation services
3. Performing data match of transportation services to eligible direct services paid under the Direct Service program.

Verifying these items presents a great challenge because districts must extract and blend the required data from multiple systems (SIS, IEP, Routing, Service Tracking/Medicaid Claiming).

How to overcome these challenges?

Work with district transportation and special education management system providers to implement a solution to track ridership, conduct service matching, and validate claims. Solution should:

- Allow routing information (e.g., which students ride on which buses) to pre-populate onto scannable forms to limit data capture effort for transportation staff.
- Support scannable forms that allow import of ridership information with zero data entry by school staff.
- Seamlessly transfer ridership data to your special education service tracking/claiming system in order to automate the matching of ridership data to Direct Service claim data.
- Conduct all required validations to limit claim denials and ensure audit protection.
Calculating the Transportation Ratio for Cost Reconciliation

How can I use the data collected to calculate the necessary ratios for claiming reimbursement through cost reconciliation process:

1. One important requirement for cost ratios is that a district must also capture ridership data for all students on the specially equipped buses (not just the students that are Medicaid eligible as with claiming transportation through Fee-for-Service claiming). This presents a very similar challenge for most districts as normal transportation claiming.

2. This is easily accomplished through the same system of integrating student/route data with a scannable paper based documentation system — only different requirement is that ride data must be captured for all students.

3. Many states also require the ratio to include the calculation of how many rides were on days that a Medicaid eligible student also provided a reimbursable health service. This is the exact same requirement as is present to claim transportation through FFS claiming.

4. Districts NEED to make sure that the system they are using for claiming transportation is able to produce reported detail every trip for every student on a specially equipped bus for the entire school year as this will be required in any audit of your transportation cost report. This is by far the most common reason that districts have Transportation cost reconciliation claims denied and/or have had to pay back previously received Medicaid reimbursement in Audit.

How to Ensure You’re Prepared for an Audit
How to Ensure You’re Prepared or an Audit

Follow this checklist...

- Keep electronic copies of all paper records that are QUICKLY searchable by a variety of factors (route, date, student) for audit purposes.
- Ensure you can easily locate the matching paid direct service for each claimed transportation service.
- Ensure Medicaid eligibility, parental consent and transportation IEP authorization data is readily accessible.
- Store easily accessible backup documentation required for transportation ratios necessary for cost reporting purposes (cost reconciliation only).

Case Study: Broward County Public Schools

After implementing a scannable solution for claiming transportation, Broward County Public Schools...

- Increased documented transportation services by over 500%
- Increased claimed transportation services to over $1.2mm annually
Thank you.