

Episode 06: Why is NAMSS Important to the MSP's Career Path?

DILSA:

Welcome to Under the Microscope, brought to you by the Right Credentials Network and your host, Dilsa Bailey, a certified medical services professional for over 30 years. Under the microscope is where we examine, analyze, and unveil the many layers of the medical services profession and its contribution to patient safety in a health care setting.

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This episode is about a vital educational source to the professional community of MSPs. Our acronym for the Medical Services Professional. The source is known as NAMSS, which stands for the National Association of Medical Staff Services. Lots of acronyms, right? But do you want to learn more? Learn the benefits of being a part of NAMSS. Listen in with our guest.

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Today we have a very special guest, Karen Claxton. She is the 2025 President of NAMSS, the National Association of Medical Staff Services. I know that's a mouthful, right. But our guest, Karen, is going to provide us with some valuable information, a lot of details about NAMSS. So Karen, welcome to Under the Microscope. We're so happy that you're able to join us today. And we can't wait to hear more about NAMSS. So, before I get started, though, I want to let you come on and tell us about your journey as a medical services professional.

KAREN:

Well, thank you, Dilsa, for the invitation. And you know, I love to hear stories of how we all came to be MSPs because they are all varied, right? So, um, I was actually working in the state mental health system, and we were located on the local hospital's campus. And one of my coworkers. Her daughter is a pharmacist at the hospital and was just telling her one night at work, I mean, at home over dinner, how her coworker had been looking for someone for a position for a few months and couldn't find anyone and was just kind of telling her mother a little bit about the position. And her mother said, you know what, that just sounds like Karen that I work with. And so she came to work the next day and told me about it, and I thought the same thing. Wow, that just sounds like me. You know, something that would be perfect for me. So, I did reach out to the person, and she brought me in to interview and offered me the position. And I think the right well, she said the reason she offered me the position was because I was the only one that applied that had experience taking minutes. And she figured if I can do minutes, then I can learn credentialing and privileging. So, she hired me, and it was the best decision of my life. And, um, so I was the only MSP in my hospital and had to learn things from the ground up. And so, we'll probably get into some of that as we go along. And, and how other MSPs played a role in growing me up in the profession.

DILSA:

Awesome, awesome. Yeah, we were all thrown into this. Nobody wakes up. I don't think anybody grows up going, I want to go into credentialing. You know, I want to be a medical services professional. Um, because I was thrown into it. I started a temporary job at a hospital. It was supposed to last two weeks, *and here we are (Karen)*.

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And here we are. Yes. Yeah. Oh, well, thank you for sharing that because I know there are listeners have a lot of questions. I'm sure they're going to have a lot of questions about how to get into the profession or if they're already in the profession, what can they learn? How can they grow? How can they continue to grow? And um, I want and hopefully we can invite, if our listeners aren't already, but we can invite some of our collaborative partners or our partners that we want to collaborate with, you know, the other departments and whether it's a managed care organization or a health or hospital. Um, they're every they're we overlap with a lot of different other specialties. So I want to bring that to the front if possible. But I want to make sure that the listeners get what they need, and if not, they'll be able to reach out to you at a later, later time and get more information. So are you ready for all these questions? *Huh?* Well, first of all, how did you learn about NAMSS?

KAREN

Well, when I started, like I said, I was the only person I was hired by the Risk Manager, and she knew NAMSS and GAMSS would be important. And so that was first week. We need you to join GAMSS, my Georgia State Association and NAMSS. So, I was able to look those up and join them very early on in my career. So thank goodness for that because, um, I was able to find people to support me, information, education, all those things that I needed and had no resources locally for. So NAMSS really, um, really made it possible for me to grow in the profession and to learn and be, you know, successful. I don't know what I would have done without NAMSS.

DILSA

Yeah, I have to agree with that. Same thing with me. I actually, you know, because once we get into this role, whatever role that I had started out, I ended up also being the CME coordinator at the hospital, and one of the speakers actually had spoken recently at NAMSS, and he was the one who introduced me to NAMSS. So we were sitting there having lunch, and I was talking about how I was thrown into this and was trying to learn, and he said, well, you know, I just spoke at NAMSS. So that's how I got introduced to NAMSS and then actually also started interacting with other hospital medical staff, um, personnel, to find out what am I supposed to be doing? And they introduced I was in Pennsylvania at the time, and I was introduced to PAMSS, or it was the Southeastern Pennsylvania group at that time. So yeah, it takes a village to bring us in. And I'm so happy to have

heard about NAMSS because it has been very valuable throughout my entire career. And that's why I wanted to highlight NAMSS, because I think it's very crucial to anybody that's in this profession. So NAMSS. Let me. Let me give you let you give me a little bit more perspective about NAMSS. It started out as an organization pretty much focused on hospital settings. You know, that's why the name Medical Staff Services is in there. Um, but at that time it was focusing really on credentialing and privileging. But there are other aspects. We're growing a lot. So, I want to want you to give us a little bit more information about who else it would be valuable for to join NAMSS. Um, you know, all the other different aspects of the medical staff, medical services profession, right?

KAREN:

So you're correct. It started in mainly MSPs in the hospital setting. And we're still our membership is pretty heavy in hospital MSPs. But of course, as you know, we don't work in a vacuum. And so we start realizing that there are people doing things in other settings. So credentialing and/or privileging happens in so many different settings besides just the acute care. You know, there's academics, there's ambulatory care. Um, things we don't think about. Correctional health care, VA's military hospitals. Um, just so many different settings. You have critical access. We have some members that are in dental practices, FQHCs. And then you have the health plans, locum tenens, um, managed care. We have group practices, rural clinics, you know, just so many different settings, telehealth. And so some of those settings do both credentialing and privileging. Some just do credentialing. But we all kind of work together. Right? We have contact with other, you know, CVOs and health plans and all of these things. So the credentialing and privileging really kind of broke out into different settings too. And then we started having maybe it's MSPs moving into other realms or what happens a lot of times is, you know, the hospital leadership recognizes that if you want something done and you want it done, well, then you give it to the medical staff office, right? And so then we have people working in medical education, which you mentioned provider enrollment. We have members that are more in the quality realm, may be doing focus review or ongoing review. We have members that are working for software vendors, right. If they're going to do software that we use, they need someone that knows what we need in some of those roles or for training. We have members that are, you know, attorneys and they practice law. And a lot of their work is in the medical staff realm or credentialing and privileging. And then we also have members working in compliance, accreditation and some of those areas. So, I think it's very narrow minded for maybe an MSP to just say this is, you know, I'm in a hospital setting. This is what I do. I think we always need to be aware of, you know, some of the departments, some of the industry partners that we are kind of connected with, where we can continue to grow our skills and our, you know, just our knowledge base or look for ways to collaborate and improve together.

DILSA:

Awesome. Now, you've mentioned all of the ones that I was thinking of is like, there's there's just so many different areas that it starts out as credentialing, but then you realize, for instance, that's how provider enrollment came along. Everybody was worried about getting credentialed at a health plan. Well, from one perspective, it's provider enrollment. But at the health plans perspective, from their perspective, it's credentialing. So, you know, it overlaps. And there's so much information that we all have to share. You know, even licensing you know, there there's people who are focused strictly on licensing. But that's an aspect of credentialing. So um, it's a big open field. And it just started in one little place but realized that we are, have a wide variety of skill sets that we can bring to the table. And, um, that's, that's a thank you for bringing it up, all of those different aspects, all those different industry entities that we can survive in. And that's why we need to continually educate ourselves and get educated.

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So, what type of characteristics though, and you mentioned before that your personality fit that particular position. What kind of what characteristics do you think makes a person wants to come into this profession, or what makes them successful in this profession? So there's somebody that's listening who's thinking about us. Maybe you can give them some hints on whether they be a good fit or not.

KAREN:

Yeah, that's, that is a good question. So what? You know, what about that conversation made my coworker think of me and what when she was describing it, what made me think, oh, that does. And I think a big part of it is being curious, you know, asking questions. We want things to make sense. And, um, you know, credentialing, privileging is a little bit like detective work, right? You're putting pieces of a puzzle together and looking to make sure everything you know is fitting, as it should. And so I think that was the beginning of just being curious. And it sounded very interesting to me. And where we are in South Georgia, rural South Georgia, um, if I have a position open, the chances of me getting a seasoned MSP, a certified MSP to come work for me is slim to none because, you know, the role doesn't pay enough to relocate. And you know, the skill set is just not something, it's a little niche, right. So, um, it's not something that you just find with somebody walking by. So, what we have done is we hire for the soft skills and then train them in credentialing and privileging. So the things that I look for being curious, um, critical thinking. Paying attention to detail. Good follow-through. Good communication. Um. Adaptability. Right. It's not stagnant. It's always. It's a very dynamic, um, place to be. And so, you have to change, you know, rules and regs change. Um, technology changes. So, someone that is able to adapt. I think ethics is a very big thing. We need to understand how important that is to gain the confidence of a medical staff or your coworkers. I think you need a professional presence. We are professionals and you know, many, many of our members now are. We have some with PhDs and they are in positions of, you know, maybe a vice president of

a very large corporation. So professional presence, in my opinion, is very important. I think I said attention to detail, being able to follow through and follow back up is essential. Being diplomatic, you know, sometimes we feel caught between the medical staff and, um, administration and sometimes it's a fine line. You have to, you know, be a little diplomatic and I think resilient. Um, if things are tough or things don't go our way, how we respond to that is very important. So those are kind of the things I look for when I am bringing someone in that I can train in, in the role.

DILSA:

That's excellent. That's excellent. And one of the things too, I think you have to be a little obsessive compulsive. That you can't let go. You got to get the answer to that. It has to be right. You got to get it. Yeah. So yeah I like like that. That's all that all of those are great assets or skill sets that you need to have for this profession because this profession is a little insane, but it's not something you can walk away from. Everybody that I know, we're like, we just keep hanging on there, you know, just can't let it go because, you know, basically that sometimes is.

KAREN:

I'm like a dog after a bone, you know, I'm going to keep going until I get it.

DILSA:

Yeah. Can't let go. Yeah. So why would someone want to join NAMSS? I mean, I think you just describe the perfect person to be in this profession and why. And we've talked about the advantages but give me some more detail on why should our listeners want to join NAMSS.

KAREN:

Look back to when I joined NAMSS and there were two really big benefits for me. One was the education. And the other was the networking. So at the time, NAMSS and this is going to date me at the time, NAMSS had some independent study modules, and they would literally mail you a binder every month that you reviewed, and then you would have a proctored test. And I went through all of that, and I just learned so much. So, they were offering me the education that I desperately needed. And this is not education you can get at a local college or, um, you know, it just it was the only place to get the education that I needed, and I did. And then also the networking and mentoring.

When I started, NAMSS had a forum on their website, and I posted questions every single day, probably more than once a day. I did, and because I had so many questions. I did find a mentor at a nearby hospital, but I knew I couldn't call her five times a day, so I had to have some other people that I relied on, and the forum was that I could post a question. And MSPs are the most, um, generous group of people with their Thoughts and their experiences and their policies and their forms and their wisdom. And they were so willing to share that with me. And it's really funny. My

first position with NAMSS came from that because they wanted to put a task force together to look at the NAMSS website and make some changes and updates. And so, they looked at the top users and guess who the top user was? Me. Um, because that's how many questions I asked. So I actually got to serve on the NAMSS task force, um, for the website. And this was back probably early 2000's. That's how much support it offered me.

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So that also the networking just outside of what the forum is now, the Connection Zone, which is excellent, you post a question, you're going to get answers and input from multiple people across the United States. It's a great place to connect with others and get your questions answered. Or, you know why reinvent the wheel? Someone will share a policy or forum with you. So, the Connection Zone and then the networking. So, if you go to a conference, you've been. There's so many people. We are the friendliest people on earth. And you meet people. You meet people that later you can reach out to for advice or for more information. There's also networking. You know, we have virtual, um, webinars and things like that, and often given a chance for Q&A and, and or chat opportunities that you can network with other NAMSS members. A few years ago, NAMSS started offering free webinars for their members. So at least once a month or at least 12 times a year, there is a free webinar and it's just free information and education and it's varied. So sometimes it's provider enrollment, sometimes it's, you know, hospital-based privilege and credentialing. Sometimes it's OPPE, FPPE. So, it's very varied. But you'll find something there for what you need, or you know, don't keep those blinders on. Uh, that doesn't apply to me because it may not apply to you today, but it may be something you need tomorrow. Or maybe just having a conversation with someone from a different department, or your leadership that you want to have some knowledge. And so, you know, MSPs never quit learning. And I think that goes back to being curious. We like to have that information.

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Another really big benefit of NAMSS to me is the mentoring opportunities. So they actually have a mentoring matching program. If you are new to the field, you're looking for a mentor. You can sign up there. And we have mentors that are in provider enrollment in, you know, hospitals, in ambulatory care in, you know, different settings. So, we will help match you with someone that can mentor you along in your career. So those are kind of the top benefits for me. And then NAMSS has some really awesome new programs that I am so excited about. And one is the Tomorrow's Leaders program. This is the first year and for ten members who have applied and who are selected. They will go through a leadership program that will be taught by past presidents, and it's based on a program that all the NAMSS secretaries attend during their year that they serve as secretary. Henry S. Givray does Leadership's Calling Program. So it's based on that, which was a life changing program for me personally. And I'm so excited about that. There's a mixture of online modules, uh,

virtual um, sessions and then also an in-person session at conference. So very excited about that program. The application process closed a few weeks ago. We got a lot of applications. It's very difficult. Thank goodness I'm not I don't have to select but very difficult to just choose ten people because we have some amazing talented members in NAMSS. Wow. So that's one really good program I'm excited about.

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Last year we started the speaker development program, so I think we talked about professional presence and presenting is a very big, you know, aspect of that. You may be in a meeting, you may be with your medical staff or in a medical executive committee or with your leadership or a department directors' meeting or something where you have to give information. And we want, you know, MSPs to be comfortable with that, where they can speak with confidence. So I think that's an extremely important program and exciting. We had a pre-conference offering this past year, which was on presentation and speaking skills and an amazing class. And to me, the price point was just amazing too. I highly recommend it. And um, you know, look for that. It's it is to me. I went through that program too. Um, it just gave me confidence that I probably never would have imagined before the class of being able to present and speak. So excellent opportunities there. NAMSS also is very big on advocacy. Um, don't know if you know, several years ago NAMSS has a round table every year, but several years ago, the topic was moving to a three year reappointment and Joint Commission attended. And what came out of that is Joint Commission did approve the three year reappointment. So that started with NAMSS advocacy. Right. And yeah, one of the big projects right now is the standard occupational classification. NAMSS just submitted an application last year to hopefully get us our own classification. Right now we're kind of grouped in HR. We all know we are not HR And so I'm very optimistic if that is, um, public on the website, if anyone's interested. Amazing work by that task force. And Molly Ford and Diane Meldy. Um, just an amazing submission. So very, very, um, optimistic about that outcome. So that's huge. And so those are kind of the top of mind things that NAMSS offers that maybe not everyone is aware of.

DILSA:

That's amazing. Yes. Definitely join NAMSS. I mean, it's a very valuable organization. And you covered everything. The networking, the mentorship, those things. I was going to ask, why were those important? I found the networking was very valuable for me. If I hadn't had that, I don't know where I would have turned to, because one of the things, as you mentioned, we sort of move into so many different directions, especially in a hospital setting. I started out in the hospital setting. Um, started out doing credentialing, as I mentioned before, continuing medical education coordinator. Uh, I felt like I was I was actually working as the staff liaison because we ended up hiring a separate staff liaison to bring people in. It was just there's just so many things helping with the committees. I can't even give you the whole line of things that I ended up doing, you know, working in the hospital

setting and then moved over to the managed care setting, thinking that was going to be simpler and easier. I did enjoy it better, but because I didn't, I wasn't pulled in as many directions as the hospital. But there's still a lot of different areas that you would have to be proficient in. You know, delegation arrangements, actually performing the audits, dealing, um, more closely with the accrediting agencies because, you know, we did Joint Commission and from the medical services side on the hospital, but within NCQA, it was a lot focused on the credentialing piece. So there was a lot more, a lot more. Um, involvement in a lot of different aspects. I mean, you're also involved with risk if your organization is providing, um, the insurance for your providers. Um, you're involved with peer review. You're involved with quality. There's just so many different areas that MSPs are involved in, and they grow into those professions or they, um, just have to continue to collaborate and communicate to make sure that everything is going well or operating efficiently in your own department. So that was a wonderful, um, overview of what the value of NAMSS is because it's extremely valuable.

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Now, mentioning those other folks, um, how would you go about building a network or collaborating with them, like the peer review people, the risk people, all of those good individuals that actually provide information to us. You know, and then again, we deal with on the health plan side or sometimes the group practice size, billing and revenue cycle, all of those people. How would you go about building a network with them? Because someone just walking into the door and just getting handed a credentialing file don't really know all the aspects of that, or how that affects all the different other portions of the organization bringing in that provider and making sure that the, the, the, the major outcome is patient safety.

KAREN:

Yeah. I, you know I think it goes back to being curious and, you know, looking at the down flow of information or, um, who else relies on that information. And it's just important to be open sometimes, you know, we get to this is our information and we're not going to share this information, but really stop and think, is it really that, you know, is this information something that should be siloed, or is this information that that needs to be shared? Uh, really understanding what peer review is and that confidentiality? You know, I had someone tell me one time, uh, resident was coming right out of residency and she said, well, I have a DEA, but she didn't have the number or anything. And I reached out to the residency, um, program and said, hey, she doesn't have her DEA. Can you share it back with her? And they said, no, that's peer reviewed, protected. And I thought, okay, that's not. But, uh, we'll, you know, go to plan B. Um, so, you know, you really need to understand when to hang on to something and, and when to share, to be open minded. How can we work with another department to be more efficient, to serve our customer? You know, we shouldn't make a physician duplicate something five times, right? Right. What is it is, you know, can we share

the application they submit to the medical staff office with, um, payor enrollment or with HR if they're going to be employed? Um, you know, some of those things that you look at and our first instinct is, no, we can't share that. But we might be able to share part of it. Right? The demographics and um, some of that, but maybe the attestation questions we don't share, maybe we get them to sign a release in the beginning that says, hey, I'm fine with you sharing these demographics with the other departments so that I don't have to repeat this information. So just kind of keeping an open mind at who else might benefit and how we can be more efficient work together. We can learn from each other. I think it's important to be consistent, um, that follow through, um, reliability also, you know, saying I don't know when we don't know instead of trying to bluff our way through something. If you don't know something, you don't know it. You know, just say, hey, I don't know but let me do some research and I'll get back to you. And I think that builds trust with the other departments that you may work with. And then that extends outside your organization. Uh, you, for whatever reason that you're reaching out with, you know, the medical board, and you can build some of those relationships or, you know, with the insurance company, you can build a relationship. So, you know, just keeping an open mind, being friendly and having that follow through and thinking outside the box, don't just get so caught up into this is what I usually do, but looking for not just being open to it, but actually looking for ways to collaborate and be more efficient and work together.

DILSA

Like perhaps getting invited to their department meetings or committee meetings and inviting them to your meetings to see if there's any overlap that they can get a better understanding of. Something along those lines would help, too. *Yeah, absolutely.*

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Yeah. Um. What role, what professionals are, what other roles. And I know we've talked about a lot of them, but what roles are what jobs or what types of professions that that's in the medical service profession? I mean, we mentioned credentialing, provider enrollment, licensing, but what else? Um, have you come across that's deemed medical services?

KAREN:

Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned licensing too, because I think I had kind of, um, missed that one. And our medical board in Georgia is very collaborative with our state association. They come and give an update every year. They actually sent their licensing specialists to, um, some of our, um, GAMSS courses and all to learn more about credentialing so they could understand what it is we do because it's important. Right? They're doing the background check, too, like we are, uh, so a very good, um, opportunity to network and, um, an area that we closely align with. So, you know, the credentialing specialist, who that's what they do is credentialing in various roles, and then it can go up from a specialist manager, director can be in so many CVO, it can be in health care, um, managed care. It

could be in um IPA or IPO, just so many different areas and provider enrollment. And CME coordinators and so many things. And you mentioned also delegated credentialing and, um, contracting and things like that, that our members may be a part of, or they that may be an area that where they grow into. So I mean, there's just so much, the quality realm, PPE, just many different areas and opportunities to continue to grow our skills and our reach.

DILSA:

That's great. You know, it's not a, um, it's not pigeonholed. It's not siloed. It can grow in so many different directions. It's a wonderful career, really is. *Absolutely*. So what's coming down the pike, though, for NAMSS in relationship to AI? Has anybody talked about AI and how it's affecting the world of credentialing? Because I know some people are a little wary because they think, you know, the basic part of credentialing will be taken away. Um, you know, like the credentialing specialist won't be needed because, you know, AI will just roll out and do all the verifications and stuff. Um, is that a conversation that's being held at NAMSS on how to address or have you had any, um, feedback from any members who's concerned about AI?

KAREN:

Well, I think that is a concern. Anytime we have new technology, I think that is a concern. You know, we start thinking about how will it affect us. You know, will it take our jobs or, or what? But, you know, as we just discussed. It's so wide the breadth of what we do and our skill set that if we could automate some of that busy work, then we can use our minds for something that requires more critical thinking over here. So, I'm not worried about AI coming in and, you know, wiping out our positions. But again, it's a very good reason to continue to grow your skills and your networks, and be aware of other opportunities and maybe skill sets of tomorrow's MSP, because we do know it's not going to be today's MSP. So NAMSS is having some conversations around AI. I'm not really sure what that's going to look like, so stay tuned. But it is on our radar and there have been some questions. And so it is something we are talking about and looking into.

DILSA:

Wow. Thank you. Karen, is there any more information you'd like to share with us? Um, about NAMSS or about or giving anybody any advice, especially those who are interested in becoming an MSP or those who are new? Um, and then those who want to collaborate, collaborate with us because they're our healthcare partners in an organization. Is there anything in addition to what we've discussed already that you'd like to share with them?

KAREN:

Well, you know, I can talk about it all day long, but I won't. Uh, is it you know, what we do is to me, is just so exciting. It's never stagnant. It's a very fulfilling job. At the end of the day, um, you make a

difference. You make a difference in the lives of the patients downstream. You make a life a, you know, a difference in the lives of the physicians we work with. Our, um, you know, our coworkers or we make a difference in the liability of our organization. So, it's very fulfilling. And for those that are curious, for those that may be looking to, um, grow skills in a different area, this is such an amazing area of health care. Uh, look into it more. Check out the information on the NAMSS website. Reach out to medical staff professionals or provider enrollment specialists and get more information and see what just feels like it clicks for you. Everyone is open to networking and to offering information, and it's the most friendly and generous and welcoming crowds you can ever imagine to join. So, um, reach out to me. Dilsa has my contact information, and I'd love to have those conversations.

DILSA:

Wow! Thank you so much. This has been a pleasure talking with you and I've learned so much and I hope everybody just listening has learned a lot to. So thank you Karen.

KAREN:

Thank you Dilsa. I appreciate that. Appreciate the opportunity to catch up with you, because we go way back and also to hopefully share some of the NamSS benefits with your audience.

DILSA:

Thank you, Karen, again for joining us. And we want to thank all of our listeners for listening in. And as usual, if you're watching us on YouTube, please subscribe, hit the like button and hit the bell to hear about our next episode. Don't forget, though, to share these episodes with other medical services professionals, because our goal is to help us collaborate with each other and our health care partners. Thank you again. Come back and listen again.

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