The Ethics of Ethics
Taking the Right Path
CORE VALUES

INTEGRITY

ETHICS

ACCOUNTABILITY

PRINCIPLES
Excerpted (and Paraphrased) from “Six Words That Make You Sound Weak” (to an Auditor)

1. Think
2. Need
3. Want
4. Guess
5. Hope
6. Suppose
Ethical Challenges in Healthcare

1. Avoiding conflicts of interest
2. Balancing profit with serving patients and providing charity care
3. Equal treatment for all patients versus donors and VIPs
4. Managing care for those who may not have decision-making capacity
Business Ethics Vs. Medical Ethics

• Ethics provides a framework for understanding and interpreting right and wrong.
• Healthcare codes of conduct outline relevant ethical standards.
• Ethics and morals are often used interchangeably.
Recent Physician Practice Enforcement Actions

Enforcement actions focus on billing and coding practices

- Hypothetical situation
  - Physician-owned clinic where other clinicians provide services
  - Claims billed under incorrect provider, listed incorrect services and lacked appropriate documentation
  - Services performed lacked medical necessity
Business Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

• A potential conflict of interest exists whenever a person’s outside activities, financial interests, or other personal interests could potentially influence or appear to influence his or her ability to make objective decisions in the course of fulfilling his or her business responsibilities.

• A potential conflict of interest is not necessarily and actual conflict of interest.
Recent Physician Practice Enforcement Actions

Enforcement actions focus on medical necessity

- **Hypothetical situation**
  - Physician performs testing on equipment within the practice
  - Tests used for screening and monitoring patients' condition
  - Patients not diagnosed with a condition that the testing requires
  - Physician fails to spend time required amount of time with patients or conduct necessary assessments.
Tips for Compliance that Align with Ethical Practice

• Develop policies and procedures to address risks
• Develop a code of conduct that addresses actual situations and align with rules and regulations
• Provide effective training and education
• Foster effective communication
• Conduct audits to monitor compliance or hire someone who can
• Address problems when they are identified
Questions?