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Compliance 101 - The OIG Work Plan: An essential tool for every healthcare compliance program

by Jasmine R. Foo, JD

Jasmine R. Foo (jfoo@aanp.org) is the Manager of Contracts and Governance with the American Association of Nurse Practitioners in Austin, TX.

[linkedin.com/in/jasmine-rae-foo](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jasmine-rae-foo)

Those of us who work in healthcare compliance know how overwhelming it can be to keep track of all the guidelines and laws set in place to defend against potential fraud, waste, and abuse. There are so many elements determined by state and federal laws that an effective compliance program in the healthcare industry must be able to focus on and keep track of. The impermanence of healthcare regulation and the constant threat of healthcare reform can make compliance to these laws tricky and confusing. In turn, non-compliance to the rules, whether intentional or unintentional, can lead to expensive and time-consuming audits and sanctions.

The Human Health Services' (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) provides a list of compliance education materials^[1] on their website to help healthcare organizations understand the laws that affect them and cultivate an effective culture of compliance, but even they acknowledge that each organization must develop a compliance program that best suits that healthcare organization's needs.

How does an organization determine which problem areas to focus on during the year, when there are constantly many issues to address? Luckily for us, HHS-OIG also periodically publishes the OIG Work Plan, a free tool accessible by the public that gives any savvy healthcare compliance program a blueprint for organizational success.

Whether you are a newcomer or a seasoned veteran to the healthcare compliance industry, learning about the OIG Work Plan and monitoring every update can be crucial to keeping your healthcare organization fit, functional, and out of trouble. The Work Plan was created by HHS-OIG as a way to organize and coordinate various audits and evaluations throughout the fiscal year, and is updated monthly throughout the year. These audits and evaluations allow the OIG to monitor HHS programs via an "independent and objective oversight that promotes economy, efficiency, and effectiveness..."^[2]

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