talkingpoints

HIM Workforce

AHIMA's Key Message

1. Health information management (HIM) professionals have earned a prominent leadership role in ensuring the quality, privacy, and efficiency of clinical information as the healthcare industry moves toward an increasingly electronic and global environment.
2. AHIMA is working to provide a complete and accurate picture of current and future HIM employment needs in order to effectively advocate on behalf of its members for increased recognition, opportunities, and improved salaries, which will attract and retain higher skilled, qualified professionals.

TARGET AUDIENCES: Healthcare industry leaders — especially HIM employers, policy-makers, and academic leaders

OBJECTIVES: Advance the profession by demonstrating the need for highly skilled HIM professionals and the unique value of AHIMA credentialed members

KEY POINTS/FACTS:

Workforce needs
- A competent HIM workforce skilled at understanding, organizing, and analyzing clinical data is needed to improve healthcare outcomes, implement standards, and control costs
- Skilled HIM professionals are needed to serve in a broad range of roles throughout healthcare that involve planning and managing the content, integrity, accessibility, use, and protection of information resources
- AHIMA's workforce study research supports the Bureau of Labor Statistics report that indicates a 49 percent growth in the number of HIM workers by 2010
- Many HIM positions are unfilled or are being filled by unqualified and noncredentialed staff. Over time, this will have a negative effect on the healthcare industry, eroding established standards as well as possibly impacting the quality of data within the health record
- Research indicates industry advances toward the electronic health record (EHR) will provide new roles for HIM professionals as key members of the EHR team

Diverse roles and work settings
- HIM professionals possess a core set of critical skills and competencies that allow them to adapt to multiple roles and work settings

  Roles
    - Enterprise-wide data and information policy development and quality oversight
    - Organizational privacy/security officer
    - Documentation Specialist responsible for monitoring accuracy and completeness of electronic and personal health records and other clinical databases
    - Organization-wide chief information officer
    - Organization-wide coding and revenue cycle management
    - Data mining and analytics
    - Information access and disclosure specialist, including release of information under HIPAA

  Work settings
    - Inpatient/acute care
    - Outpatient/ambulatory
    - Physician office/clinic
    - Consulting firm
    - Skilled nursing facility
    - Educational institution
    - Government agency
    - Public health
    - Technical vendor

Education
- The continued availability and further development of the HIM workforce requires innovative training and curricula
- Research shows the level of college degree is strongly related to the level of authority and salary
- More than 85 percent of AHIMA members have a college degree. More than 11 percent of this group have a master's or doctorate
- More than 228 accredited degree programs are available nationwide

Credentials
- To ensure its members meet professional standards of excellence, AHIMA issues credentials in HIM
- Members earn credentials through a combination of education, experience, and performance on national certification exams
- Following their initial certification, AHIMA members must maintain their credentials and thereby the highest level of competency for their employers and consumers through rigorous continuing education requirements
- The following certifications are currently offered by AHIMA:
    - CCA—Certified Coding Associate
    - CCS—Certified Coding Specialist
    - CCS-P—Certified Coding Specialist—Physician-based
    - CHP—Certified in Healthcare Privacy
    - CHS—Certified in Healthcare Security (offered jointly with HIMSS)
    - CHPS—Certified in Healthcare Privacy & Security (offered jointly with HIMSS)
    - RHIA—Registered Health Information Administrator
    - RHIT—Registered Health Information Technician
- 80 percent of respondents to AHIMA's workforce study reported that AHIMA credentials are required and/or respected in the workplace

How AHIMA supports the HIM workforce
- AHIMA directs professional education curricula and accreditation policies that prepare future professionals for successful careers
- AHIMA has increased support for colleges and universities that currently educate HIM professionals and encourage new HIM programs
- Through its advocacy efforts and e-HIM initiative, AHIMA actively supports full transition to electronic health records and adoption of nationwide standards for managing patient information
- AHIMA offers tools to recruit prospective students and engages its network of component state associations and members in a national recruitment effort to colleges and universities that offer HIM education
- FORE has stepped up its scholarship and loan programs for students and educators to the fullest extent of its financial capacity

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About the Workforce Study

The AHIMA Workforce Assessment Study was conducted from 2002 to 2003 by the Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, University at Albany, Rensselaer, NY. The researchers conducted independent surveys involving AHIMA members, graduating students, and program directors at accredited education programs as well as case studies at several employers of HIM professionals. The Workforce Assessment Study is funded through AHIMA's Foundation of Research and Education (FORE), and supported in part by a leadership grant from 3M Health Information Systems. Additional grant support has been provided by MedQuist, Inc., and by contributions to FORE from AHIMA's Component State Associations and member gifts.

About AHIMA

AHIMA is the national association of health information management (HIM) professionals. AHIMA's 46,000 members are dedicated to the effective management of personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. Founded in 1928 to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA is committed to advancing the HIM profession in an increasingly electronic and global environment through leadership in advocacy, education, certification, and lifelong learning. For information about the Association, go to www.ahima.org.

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