Seven for 11: Attesting to Meaningful Use

In January, stage 1 of the meaningful use financial incentive program began. Healthcare organizations throughout the country are creating new policies and investing in technology systems to meet meaningful use guidelines. Along the way, organizations are making decisions that will impact their HIM processes and workflow. Are you involved in those decisions?

Don’t miss this unprecedented opportunity to help shape policies, said Meg McElroy, RHIA, MBA, program manager, ARRA & ICD-10 at Ascension Health in St. Louis, MO, which is the country’s largest Catholic healthcare system. Her program provides oversight and guidance on ARRA activities to its health ministries throughout 17 states as they prepare to attest to stage 1.

"Assert yourself. Don’t let the process be decided for you or wait for someone to call you. Otherwise you’ll be sitting as an HIM leader with processes that you had no input in, but that you are going to be held accountable for," said McElroy, who is a member of the AHIMA Meaningful Use Stage Two work group.

Here are seven actions you can take in 2011 to prepare for meeting stage 1 meaningful use requirements.

1. Learn the meaningful use program. Last July, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published the final rule and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) published a companion final rule describing the standards, specifications, and certification criteria for EHRs. Here are some basics.

- The three-stage program gives Medicare and Medicaid bonuses to eligible professionals and hospitals who demonstrate “meaningful use” of certified electronic health record technology. Some differences exist between the timelines for Medicare and Medicaid meaningful use programs.

- Registration opened in January. To be eligible, a professional or hospital must participate in one or more Medicare or Medicaid programs.
The healthcare industry is dramatically changing—who knows what the future will bring? Committed to our vision of “quality healthcare through quality information,” AHIMA remains our members’ guidepost for career advancement, public policy making, and education, and we’re asking you to help spread the word to your colleagues.

As an AHIMA member, you’ve enjoyed many career-enhancing benefits. Share those benefits with your fellow professionals by bringing them on board as AHIMA members. Send them to https://www.ahimastore.org/ProductDetailMembership.aspx to join online. We’ll make convincing them even easier with a downloadable e-mail outlining why joining AHIMA is a great idea. Download and send it to anyone (or everyone!) you know. To download the e-mail or for more information please visit www.ahima.org/membership/memberreferralprogram.aspx.

Convinced Someone to Join?
You’ll earn a chance to win an American Express Gift Card prize!

1st Prize: $1,000
2nd Prize: $500
3rd Prize: $250

Use the tools and start looking for new members. The stronger AHIMA gets, the better prepared we’ll be to affect the future of healthcare challenges.

www.ahima.org/membership (800) 335-5535 info@ahima.org
Professionals and hospitals can “attest” by showing that they are meeting the requirements for a 90-day period. Separate sets of measures exist for eligible professionals and hospitals. For example, hospitals must report on 15 clinical quality measures and two sets of health IT functionality measures, a core set of 14, and a menu set from which hospitals choose five out of 10.

EHR systems must be certified by an ONC-Authorized Testing and Certification Body (ONC-ATCB). As meaningful use requirements develop over time, EHR certification criteria will progress in accordance with them.

Sixty-two regional extension centers (RECs) around the country have opened to help providers adopt, implement, and use certified EHRs.

Meaningful use is currently a voluntary program, but after 2015, eligible professionals who do not meet requirements will receive reduced Medicare payments. Hospitals may face similar reductions, although no regulation currently exists.

One of the easiest ways to get acquainted with meaningful use basics is to log onto AHIMA’s ARRA Web site, where you’ll find:

- a set of eight easy to understand, concise white papers
- many in-depth Journal of AHIMA articles written by HIM professionals who are national experts on meaningful use
- helpful links to government resources

2. Join the process. In many organizations, systems and procedures are being fine-tuned to meet meaningful use objectives…but sometimes without complete understanding of key HIM areas of expertise, such as a bird’s eye view of the patient’s trajectory through the organization and patient privacy and release of information regulations. If you’re not already involved, join a taskforce and cultivate a relationship with IT departments.

“This is a multi-disciplinary process. You need the cooperation of people across the organization,” said Cecilia Backman, MBA, RHIA, CPHQ, associate director of health record integrity at Dallas, TX-based Parkland Health & Hospital System, which plans to attest in second quarter 2011.

Not sure how to invite yourself to the table? McElroy recommended starting a conversation by saying, “This process reports through me. Can you tell me where you are at with this measure? How can I...”
help provide input? Here are our current policies.

Dissect technical reporting requirements. Sit down with your IT colleagues and work out which data elements are needed for each health IT measure. Be sure you are pulling from appropriate and populated data fields in your EHR.

Nancy Vogt, RHT, CHC, CHP, deputy chief compliance officer at Aurora Health Care, a large integrated delivery system serving eastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois recommended to “study the published guidance. We’ve found the CMS Meaningful Use Specification Sheets to be most helpful,” said Vogt.

3. Determine release of electronic information method. Ask questions about how the information will be given to patients electronically. Will you provide CDs or “jump” drives or give access to an online portal? Who will provide and pay for the storage media: the hospital or the patient? What security issues relate to that type of storage media or the method of delivery?

At Parkland, a taskforce is developing objectives for electronic release of information. “In the short-term, we are providing electronic discharge instructions on a CD. We charge $5 for that service. Our long-term objective is to roll out a patient portal, so that this information can be pushed directly to the portal,” said Backman. “We don’t want patients bringing their own jump drives because we don’t want to take a chance in introducing viruses to our system.”

4. Do your due diligence. CMS has indicated that they will perform random audits. However, there are some gray areas in this very new program. For example, some concerns have arisen around the issue of EHR certification prior to CCHIT announcing its new EHR Alternative Certification for Hospitals (EACH) program for legacy or homegrown hospital EHR technology in January.

“Aurora has had an EHR for 15 years. Because we haven’t purchased a certified system off the shelf, it’s difficult to interpret and apply the regulations. We’ve been doing everything in our power to get to people who can assure us that we are correct in our interpretations,” said Vogt. She testified in January before the ONC Implementation Work Group of the Health Information Technology Standards Committee on “Real World Experiences Working with Meaningful Use.”

Case in point: Aurora has a homegrown patient portal they’d like to use to deliver electronic health information to patients. Vogt has sought external and internal attorney opinions, scrutinized the ONC and CMS FAQs, contacted the EHR Information Center (a new help desk for meaningful use questions), and worked her contacts to find people at CMS and ONC who might answer her questions.

5. Test the reporting and retool workflow. Expect to adjust processes as you work through reporting requirements. Plan a testing period before the official three-month reporting period begins, recommended Katie Miller, MA, RHIA, director of health information management at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, MN. “As we work toward attestation in August, some
of the challenges we've faced include the magnitude of the reporting, the difficulty matching reporting elements to workflow and the labor intensity involved,” said Miller.

So beginning this month, interdisciplinary teams at Hennepin County are reviewing and validating reports for technical and operational problems. “We'll be looking at operational changes we need to make in our workflow before we begin our three-month reporting period in May. Are the reporting staff taking data from the correct fields?” said Miller.

6. **Add or seek training as necessary.**
   As you plan IT implementations or upgrades, evaluate your work force. As needed, train, reallocate existing staff, or hire externally. ONC established six-month training programs to build an IT support workforce. The first graduates are expected this spring.

7. **Look for overlapping reporting requirements.** CMS is aligning the meaningful use program with other quality reporting programs. Understand how requirements overlap to reduce the amount of reporting.

**Next Up: Stage 2**
CMS plans to issue a proposed regulation for stage 2 late this year. In stage 2, CMS will move objectives from the menu set to the mandatory core set of health IT functionality measures and will increase the percentage threshold of the measures. In addition, some information exchanges that were tests in stage 1 will be required to be conducted in the normal course of business in stage 2. Stage 3 is still under development.

**Upcoming Events and Resources**
- **Audio Seminar**—“Transitioning to the EHR: What it Means for HIM Re-engineering,” March 8.
- **New Book**—Privacy: The Impact of ARRA, HITECH, and other Policy Initiatives by Jill Callahan Dennis, JD, RHIA.
On March 29, AHIMA’s members will have their annual opportunity to assist AHIMA and the CSAs by creating or building upon relationships with your representatives and senators in Washington, DC.

Hill Day enables AHIMA members to bring AHIMA, the CSAs, and health information management directly to their respective congressional offices. We hope you are interested in taking up the advocacy task. Register today for 2011 Hill Day.

Hill Day will once again be preceded by AHIMA’s Winter Team Talks in Washington, DC, on March 28, where members will have the opportunity to talk with AHIMA’s leadership on the many issues facing the association.

Once the Team Talks discussions are concluded, AHIMA’s Policy and Government Relations (P&GR) Team will endeavor to set up appointments for all AHIMA members coming to Hill Day to visit with their Congressional delegations. To make the most of your visit, the priority is to schedule appointments that can be made with members of Congress who represent both the area where you live (and vote) as well as those who represent the area where you work, if that is different.

New Webinars for 2011

There is always a little concern expressed from the Hill Day attendees regarding what type of preparation might be needed for Hill Day. This year, the AHIMA Policy and Government Relations team is going to do our best to alleviate those concerns by scheduling pre-Hill Day webinars. In addition to the webinars on the important key advocacy issues we will be addressing, there will be a webinar for first-time Hill Day attendees. The first-timers’ webinar will provide a glimpse of what to expect on Hill Day and some tips on what to do, what to bring, and what to study.

The webinars will not be a substitute for attending the AHIMA Hill Day Policy Briefing on March 28, or the AHIMA Hill Day Breakfast Briefing on March 29, but they will provide information specific on our advocacy focus.

Important Issues to Address

2011 will be an interesting year for Hill Day. Some may think that with the completion of ARRA-HITECH and healthcare reform legislation that our major issues are behind us. That is not so. Hill Day provides members with a chance to talk about the critical need to support the HIM workforce, the need to continue efforts and funding to advance health information technology, and to ensure Medicare and Medicaid have the resources to successfully transition to a whole new world of HIT, including the important transition to ICD-10.

Making Introductions

In addition, 2011 begins the 112th session of Congress with many new members in the House and Senate. With a new Congress, this is a great year to get involved and have your voice heard. Hill Day is the best opportunity to make a strong and positive first impression by introducing you, your profession, and your CSA to Congress while sharing with elected leaders your personal passion for the good work we do. It is our chance to put a face on who we are while making clear the reasons why HIM is so very vital to our nation’s healthcare.

Advocacy is about building relationships, and for AHIMA to build those strong relationships we need you. You are the HIM issue expert that a senator or representative can call upon because you are the constituent, you are the voter, and you are that link to the state or congressional district. If you want to join us, register today. See you in March!
The students had read about it in books. But here was an HIM department, in life’s vivid color. Coders’ eyes darting between dual computer screens. Shelves of medical records awaiting an electronic scan. The electronic health record, storing thousands of documents, accessible at the swipe of a keystroke.

Several students from the post-baccalaureate certificate in HIM program at the University of Illinois at Chicago assembled at the University of Illinois Medical Center (UICMC) recently to take their first class tour of an HIM department. After the tour, they all agreed the in-person experience was like nothing they could absorb through a book or lecture. “For me it was very enlightening because I could see the structure itself, based on our subjects and the topics that we study,” said tour participant Luz Buenaventura, a UIC student.

**Tours Fill an Important Role**

Facility tours are an important part of a HIM student’s education, according to Valerie Prater, MBA, RHIT, a HIM clinical assistant professor at UIC. Not only do tours allow students to see firsthand what they’re learning in class, it also gives them the chance to check expectations versus reality and network with industry leaders. “The tour helps validate a student’s choice of the HIM profession,” Prater said. “Afterwards I’ve heard students say, ‘Wow, I did pick the right field,’ and have heard others say ‘Well, I don’t think I want to do this.’ But it’s much better to learn that now when you are just starting the program.”

When scheduling facility tours, college staff and students are at the mercy of HIM supervisors—who have increasingly turned down requests to host student tours in recent years, Prater says. Common reasons for denying tour requests are that the facility or organization is too busy, or that such tours could potentially lead to HIPAA violations. HIPAA shouldn’t be a concern. All touring students sign HIPAA confidentiality statements at UICMC, and are exposed to practically no health information, according to Margaret Pajak, MBA, RHIA, the director of HIM and privacy officer at UICMC. Pajak and her department host about six HIM tours each year for several Chicago-area colleges.

Though all HIM departments are busy, HIM directors need to make time to provide students with the enriching educational experience provided by a tour, Pajak said. The benefit isn’t one-sided. The tours can provide UICMC potential future employees or plant business relationships that bloom when touring students enter the workforce. On a bigger scale, providing tours helps promote the HIM profession and supports the next generation of HIM professionals, Pajak said. “You truly have to care about the profession. We are busy, everybody is, but you have to make time,” Pajak said. “I think that it is time well invested.”

**Seeing HIM in Action**

The UICMC tour featured four students who had bachelor’s degrees in non-HIM areas, but had continued with school to transition into a HIM-related career. Tour sizes at UICMC typically range from small groups to entire classes of HIM students. They’re a required part of the UIC program. Unlike the hands-on professional practice experience internship that students must complete later in the program, this observational visit is simply an initial orientation to the HIM workplace. “It is designed to highlight what they are reading about, and reinforce what they are talking about in class,” Prater says.

The tour began with UICMC’s staff discussing the HIM department’s responsibilities, information systems, and hierarchy of staff. Then came a tour of workflow highlighting how documents are processed through the department and its various applications. Students were weaved through HIM work stations by UICMC’s assistant director of applications and systems, Ron Triche, Jr., MS, who explained each section’s role.

The lack of paper surprised some students, who expected “shelves and shelves” of records. UICMC’s hybrid record is nearly paperless. The experience was enlightening for the UIC students. Some were excited about the traditional HIM setting, some underwhelmed. But all agreed the experience gave context to their class work and a solid impression of an HIM department.

Following the tour, Buenaventura, a long-time coder now aspiring for an HIM management position, was sold. “Where do I submit my application?” she said with a smile. “That is how much I liked the tour.”
Upcoming Meetings

March 7
The Latest on ARRA-HITECH

March 28
Winter Team Talks
Capital Hilton, Washington, DC

March 31
Winter Team Talks
The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

April 11–12
AHIMA ICD-10 Summit

April 13
CAC Summit
Baltimore, MD

AHIMA Academy for ICD-10-CM/PCS
(check schedule for dates and locations)

May 19
Expediting Payment and Increasing Revenue in Physician Practices
(Virtual Meeting)

June 13–14
2011 Long-Term and Post-Acute Care HIT Summit
Baltimore, MD

July 15
Summer Team Talks
Swissôtel, Chicago, IL

July 16–17
Leadership Conference
Swissôtel, Chicago, IL

July 17
Coding Roundtable
Swissôtel, Chicago, IL

October 1–6
AHIMA Convention
Salt Lake City, UT

Visit www.ahima.org/events for info on all upcoming AHIMA meetings.

Gear Up for the 2011 Election Process

The important election process has begun. The Nominating Committee is developing the ballot and the candidates will be announced at the end of this month via the E-alert. Afterwards, you have the opportunity to interact with candidates before the election through the Communities of Practice. Voting is a right of every member so be sure to vote. Here is the election timeline:

April 18–29—Candidate CoP opens to the public at 9 a.m. CST on April 18 and closes at 5 p.m. CST April 29

May 2–20—AHIMA Polls Open at 12 a.m. CST on May 2 and close at 11:59 p.m. CST on May 20

Mid–July—Announcement of the 2011 AHIMA election results appear in the weekly e-alert

Voting is a member privilege so be sure to cast your vote.

Winter 2011 Issue of Perspectives Now Available

The Winter 2011 issue of AHIMA's research journal, Perspectives in Health Information is now available. Click here to read the latest research on deployment of a statewide telehealth network as well as implementation of an urban diabetes telehealth self-management intervention. This issue was co-edited by Commander David A. Dietz, MSW, MHSA, and Garth N. Graham, MD, MPH, both of the Office of Minority Health of the Department of Health and Human Services. Learn more about the submission guidelines and the manuscript review process.

AHIMA Staff Announcement

Bill Rudman, PhD, is AHIMA’s new vice president of education and workforce development for AHIMA. This position is designed to further the goals and objectives of AHIMA’s education department and CAHIIM by separating leadership responsibilities into two distinct positions. Rudman will be responsible for advancing formal academic education and workforce development in health informatics and health information management, having impact on curriculum, faculty and students. He will also work on the strategic positioning of AHIMA in the education and research environments that extend beyond our traditional academic relationships.

CAHIIM Announces Upcoming Changes

The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) recently announced that it is filing for incorporation in the state of Illinois as a non-profit, non-governmental, freestanding organization. It will also file for federal Internal Revenue Service tax status as a 501(c)(3) organization.

This is the next step in the multi-year process of CAHIIM’s evolution, says CAHIIM executive director Claire Dixon-Lee, PhD, RHIA, CPH, FAHIMA. “The process is to further distinguish and escalate the professions of HIM and health informatics among the many healthcare professions and highlight their value to employers and the healthcare industry through an academic foundation of quality educational programs accredited by CAHIIM,” Dixon-Lee said. “We also want to emphasize the importance of these educated professionals to the management of electronic health information in all its forms and systems.”

Dixon-Lee said that CAHIIM has operated independently in its accreditation decisions for more than seven years, with the support of AHIMA and input of HIM educators and practitioners. Under the leadership of 2010 AHIMA President Rita Bowen, the AHIMA Board has been fully engaged in the separation process, and AHIMA has pledged its ongoing support of CAHIIM, its mission, and its services under 2011 AHIMA President Bonnie Cassidy. A portion of the volunteer CAHIIM Board of Directors will continue to be represented through the AHIMA election process as openings become available. Learn more about program accreditation and CAHIIM.

Online Leadership Academy Presented by AHIMA and FranklinCovey

AHIMA is pleased to announce its partnership with FranklinCovey to offer a Leadership Academy webinar series for members. All webinars are 90 minutes and scheduled
from noon–1:30 p.m. (CST). The dates and titles for the first webinars are listed below:

**March 16**—Four Imperatives of Great Leaders: Achieving Results in Health Information Management

**April 20**—Clarifying Your Team’s Purpose

**May 18**—Unleashing Talent in Health Information Management

**June 15**—How Great Leaders Inspire Trust

Save the first date, March 16, and register here. See page 10 for more information.

### New AHIMA Fellows Announced

The Fellowship Review Committee has awarded AHIMA Fellowship to the following members in the second half of 2010. Based upon the review of their fellowship applications, the committee found their professional experience and background clearly demonstrate sustained and significant contributions to the health information management profession. Congratulations to Marie T. Conde, MPA, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA (CA); Laurinda B. Harman, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA (PA); Carole L. Okamoto, MBA, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA (WA); and Diana M. Warner, MS, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA (MN).

Join your colleagues and become a Fellow. The next submission deadline is February 28. Click for more information.

### New AHIMA Book Explains Legal Health Record

AHIMA has just published *The Legal Health Record: Regulations, Policies, and Guidance*. This important new book explains, from a record manager’s perspective, how to create and execute projects that result in medical records that are better organized and increasingly offer better legal defensibility. As the migration toward electronic records from older paper environments continues, professionals responsible for addressing this evolution will find content in this book that assists in meeting the challenges these changes bring to every healthcare provider and the court system. Learn more and order.

### Register for the CHPS Now for Discounted Pricing

Now is the time to register for the Certified in Healthcare Privacy and Security (CHPS) exam. AHIMA is offering discounted pricing on the CHPS exam if you register now and commit to taking the exam any time before March 4. AHIMA members pay only $199 and non-members pay just $249. Simply complete the special application to take advantage of this unbeatable pricing. Please note that immediate scoring will not be available with this offer. Just fill out the special application and e-mail it to lisa.chernikoff@ahima.org or mail to the address listed on the application. Applications can also be faxed to (312)-233-1500.

### Pearson VUE Now the Exclusive Provider of AHIMA Computer-based Testing

Just a reminder that Pearson Vue is now AHIMA’s exclusive testing service provider. With a worldwide test center network, Pearson will provide a more convenient and efficient exam experience. For more information please don’t hesitate to contact AHIMA Customer Relations at (800) 335-5535, or visit here.

### CCA Certified Coders in Demand

The demand for coders has never been greater and this need is expected to continue for years to come. New coders who earn the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) credential will immediately demonstrate their competency in the field, even if they have minimal on-the-job experience. CCA holders also distinguish themselves from non-credentialed coders and those who hold credentials from other organizations that do not require the higher level of understanding necessary to earn AHIMA certification. Learn more about the CCA and other AHIMA certifications.

### Winners of 2010 Member Referral Program Announced

AHIMA’s 2010 Member Referral Program was a huge success, so much so that we are continuing the program in 2011 with the same great prizes. Learn more. The 2010 winners are: Gloria G. Anderson, CCS (first prize); Terry Wilcox (second prize); and Rosalie M. Majid, RHIA (third prize).

### Don’t Forget to Renew Your AHIMA Membership

AHIMA is committed to your success and provides the benefits and resources to enhance your career. Renew your membership today and continue to utilize AHIMA’s many benefits. We look forward to another year of supporting your professional endeavors and delivering opportunities to advance your career. There are three easy ways to renew: online, by mail, or by phone during business hours at (800) 335-5535.
Plan to Participate in Upcoming Online Leadership Academy

AHIMA is pleased to announce it is partnering with FranklinCovey to offer a Leadership Academy webinar series for you and other colleagues within your work setting. The first webinar is scheduled for March 16 from noon–1:30 p.m. (CST).

Upcoming Webinars
Come and join us for the kickoff of our custom-made webinar series, with the session, “Four Imperatives of Great Leaders: Achieving Results in Health Information Management.” This live learning event is designed by AHIMA and powered by FranklinCovey’s LiveClicks series. Barbara Fuller, JD, RHIA, FAHIMA, past AHIMA president and leader, and FranklinCovey senior consultant Todd Wangsgard are the facilitators.

The other webinar titles and dates are as follows:

- April 20—Clarifying Your Team’s Purpose
- May 18—Unleashing Talent in Health Information Management
- June 15—How Great Leaders Inspire Trust

All of the webinars will take place from noon–1:30 p.m. CST.

What You Can Expect
These 90-minute live webinars will feature HIM experts and AHIMA Fellows who demonstrate leadership in the HIM industry. The Leadership Academy will include award-winning videos as well as live engagement with an expert consultant as well as ongoing mentoring and follow-up with HIM leaders. The sessions are based on the executive-level leadership competencies defined by AHIMA.

Additionally, there will be use of the “leadership quotient” as a pre- and post-measure of leadership in the first webinar. We are highly recommending the participation in the first webinar, as it sets the stage for the others. Also, ongoing discussion in a private Community on the CoP will be available for all participants.

Registration for the webinar is required in order to attend subsequent webinars in the series. The cost is our standard webinar price: $179 for members, $229 for non-members. Space is limited for the live sessions. If you can’t make it to the live presentation, the “Four Imperatives of Great Leaders: Achieving Results in HIM” webinar will be available in an archived version.

Leadership Academy Web Resources
Additionally, AHIMA has a new Web page devoted to the Leadership Academy. Check this out for tips to advance your career. There are other leadership materials for you on the Web site. Under the Careers in HIM, there is the Leadership Development link. Here you can find help as well as access to mentoring. AHIMA has also developed the Volunteer Leadership Core Competencies Self Assessment for you. This self-assessment outlines the competencies for the AHIMA federation (AHIMA, AHIMA Foundation, CAHIIM, CCHIIM, and CSA) volunteer leadership positions. It explains the core competencies expected for all volunteers and specifies additional competencies for director/commissioner/committee chair roles. It is a useful tool when considering volunteering for leadership positions. Individuals are invited to self-assess their competencies by checking off either a basic, intermediate or expert proficiency level and adding an example that demonstrates how the competency is met or your plan to further develop the competency. The examples may include any executive/governance level experience.

Leadership Models for e-HIM
AHIMA Leadership Models for e-HIM provide a comprehensive framework and suite of tools that both educate and guide HIM professionals to visualize, initiate and lead specific HIM domain initiatives at institutional, regional, and national levels. The tools and techniques contained in the models aspire to help HIM professionals apply theory and technical knowledge using leadership techniques to drive institutions and the healthcare industry toward achieving the vision of e-HIM.

Be moved. Be motivated. Be a part of this exciting journey toward great leadership. Save the date, March 16, and register now for the Leadership Academy. More webinar dates are coming soon.
2011 has barely begun and healthcare is already a hot topic. The implementation of electronic health records (EHRs), new HIPAA policies, and the upcoming transition to ICD-10-CM/PCS is enough to keep HIM professionals busy. However, more change is always on the way. Whether there are coding updates, technology innovations, or new legislation, staying educated and current on industry trends and the latest news is critical to working as an HIM professional.

**The Importance of HIM Education**

HIM education dates back to 1934, when professionals in the field were known as medical record librarians. The first graduating class contained only five students, all women. But now in 2011, there is a diverse group of almost 25,000 students studying HIM across the country and abroad. Those first five HIM students in 1934 were true pioneers in the field, and as we fast-forward to the present it is clear that their legacy has survived. Education has become a core component of the HIM field. HIM professionals recognize that while years of industry experience are invaluable, experience alone is not enough. It is no substitute for the steadfast dedication to lifelong learning that has become fundamental to the success of HIM professionals.

**How Do I Recertify?**

Report your CEUs online at the newly updated CEU Center. Visit [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org) and log in to MyAHIMA. Select “CEU Center,” then choose “CEU Reporting Center” to report your CEUs. If your cycle ended on December 31, 2010, you must report your CEUs by March 31, 2011, to remain ACTIVE. Certificants whose cycles ended in 2010 who do not report their CEUs will have their credential declared INACTIVE.

Haven’t earned all your CEUs yet? AHIMA has an extensive array of CEU qualifying activities to choose from. For more information on e-learning programs, webinars, audio seminars, and e-assessments, visit the AHIMA Web site.

For more information on your recertification requirements please see the newly updated Recertification Guide. For other recertification-related questions please call AHIMA Customer Relations at (800) 335-5535, or submit a customer support request and we will assist you.
Support the AHIMA Foundation Student Merit Scholarship Program

One of the major initiatives of the AHIMA Foundation is to attract and support new talent in the HIM industry by improving the educational opportunities for current and future HIM professionals through scholarships. The AHIMA Foundation annually offers merit scholarships to currently-enrolled outstanding undergraduates in HIM and HIT as well as those professionals pursuing masters or doctoral degrees in areas related to HIM and HIT practice.

In 2010, a total of 146 students submitted their applications for review. Out of that pool, 72 qualified candidates received scholarships for a total of $94,650 awarded. The 2010 award recipients included two doctoral candidates, nine master’s degree students, 23 bachelor’s degree students and 38 associate’s degree students. The scholarship recipients represent 33 Component State Associations (CSAs), and average a GPA of 3.8 (out of 4.0).

AHIMA Foundation scholarships have a significant impact on the educational and career pursuits of AHIMA members. Shaimah Hamdan, a 2010 undergraduate scholarship recipient, represents many of the grateful recipients when she shares, “I hope one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals and gain confidence in their abilities, just as the AHIMA Foundation has helped me.”

Supporting the Student Merit Scholarship Program

The ongoing gap between qualified applicants and scholarships awarded indicates a need to support even more promising HIM students each year. Corporations, CSAs, and individuals are all encouraged to support scholarship awards. Acknowledgment of scholarship support comes in many forms—on the AHIMA Foundation Web site, in AHIMA Foundation and AHIMA electronic and mailed publications, and in AHIMA convention materials. Contributing to an AHIMA Foundation scholarship is a win-win situation; by supporting future professionals in our industry you also extend name recognition for your company. Donation opportunities are outlined below.

General Scholarship Funds—Donations of any amount to the Grace Whiting Myers general scholarship fund help support the general AHIMA Foundation scholarship awards.

Named Scholarships—Donors who wish to honor or memorialize someone special may establish a scholarship fund that supports either undergraduate or graduate students in the health information field. Depending upon the type of scholarship you wish to support, contributions range from $1,000 to $2,500. Named scholarships must be renewed each year to be included in the annual scholarship award list.

Endowed Scholarships—A permanent endowment fund may be established for a minimum contribution of $25,000. This fund can be established in a scholarship category of your preference, and in honor of a person or organization of your choice.

To find out more about options to support the AHIMA Foundation with a charitable contribution, please visit the Foundation Web site or contact Bonnie Aguda at (312) 233-1175.

2011 Merit Scholarship Application Opens July 1

Please note, this year there will be one scholarship application cycle, which will be available online July 1, with a September 30 application deadline. Undergraduate students currently enrolled in CAHIM-accredited HIM programs are encouraged to apply for a merit scholarship. Graduate students enrolled in master’s, PhD, or JD degree programs in relevant areas are also encouraged to apply. Learn more about applying for a merit scholarship.
AHIMA myPHR Volunteers: New Year, New Roles

In addition to the myPHR blogger opportunities shared in the December 2010 issue of AHIMA Advantage, AHIMA’s myPHR volunteers are increasing their presence and visibility both online and in their communities. After holding presentations based on AHIMA’s Web site for personal health records, myPHR.com, and collaborating on community education and resource dissemination, volunteers will turn their efforts toward local health fairs and personal online connections in the new year.

Health Fair Facilitators
Volunteers will be equipped with display materials for events in their communities, expected to reach more people than previous presentations. Members will use poster elements, informational bookmarks, and an interactive presentation at a booth display to educate healthcare professionals and consumers on the importance of maintaining a personal health record.

These new flash-based interactive presentations can be previewed by clicking on the picture below, and will be available both on CD/DVD and online.

Patient Navigators
Central to advocating for PHRs is the growing need for health literacy. Volunteers will address this topic by fulfilling a “patient navigator” role that empowers patients to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and resources to be an active participant in their own health.

“Ask an Expert” Participants
In order to further encourage communication about health literacy and PHRs, members will have direct dialogue with consumers not only at local health fairs, but through the creation of an online Q&A platform on myPHR.com. Through this new platform, site visitors will be able to submit their questions related to health information, and myPHR campaign volunteers will provide answers to their questions, creating a living FAQ page on myPHR.com.

By advocating personal health records at the community level and addressing patients’ specific concerns securely online, the volunteers hope to inspire health advocacy at the individual level, while broadening the support network for improving one’s personal health. Volunteers will also continue to report on nearby health literacy initiatives to localize resources for consumers.

PHR Campaign Partnerships
In addition to the new volunteer roles in 2011, AHIMA is hoping to develop a PHR coalition, creating formal partnerships with other organizations and associations that support the use of PHRs, in order to help AHIMA continue moving forward in support of PHRs.

Other Digital Resources for Members
In addition to the new virtual materials available for the myPHR campaign, the PR department has been producing a digital quarterly board report series for members to review. These reports are based on the direction set by the AHIMA board of directors, and each report details the progress AHIMA is making toward building a world-class association.

Click on the image below to view the most recent board report, and visit the PR department’s multimedia page to look at other reports from 2010.

» Click on the image to view the new myPHR presentation loop.

» Watch the latest “AHIMA: Here and Now” board report, which details the results of AHIMA’s recent membership survey.
Make the Most Out of the CoP by Adding a Topic

Adding content to Communities of Practice is easy. All content (including links, resources, and comments) are housed in the same place. Use the Add a Topic link to add new content within a specific community. Go to the community using the My Communities drop down on the right side of the page.

Choose the community where you want to post the topic and click on the community (such as the Coding community). In the community, you will see that the Add a Topic icon is located on the left side of the page right under the Filters. Create a topic for discussion, post a resource, start a workspace, or collaborate on a document by choosing the icon. Once you post a topic, it is automatically approved. Additionally, as the author, you will be able to edit or remove it if needed.

When you open the Add a Topic, you will see the Topic screen. On this screen, type in a title, description (this can be a question, comment, or information related to resources), choose a category and tags (keywords that are helpful in searching). The categories are based on what the community’s facilitators have chosen for that specific community. Then either choose either Post Topic Now or Post Topic and Continue to More Options. Choosing Post Topic and Continue will open a topic dashboard. Within the topic dashboard, you have options to add a resource (documents or links), add a workspace or collaborative document or other options. All information will be housed in one easy location for members to reach.

New Terms, Conditions Available

The CoP Terms and Conditions of Use were updated in the end of 2010. Under the Member and User Obligations, the CoP Net Etiquette and compliance with AHIMA Code of Ethics were added. We are asking all members to accept these revised Terms again. So when you login to the CoP and see the new Terms, please accept.

Once you have accepted the Terms, you will be directed to your Personal Page (What’s New). The Terms page will appear only once. New members to the association will have to accept the Terms their first time into the CoP. The Terms and the Privacy Policy are also posted on the bottom of the CoP pages. Login today.

Update your Terms as well as giving a try to the Add a Topic and see just how easy it is to use the CoP.
House Teams Moving Forward

The House of Delegates (House) is the grassroots member forum of AHIMA whose purpose is to conduct the official business of AHIMA. The House is comprised of delegates from each of the 52 Component State Associations (CSA) and the AHIMA Board of Directors. Delegates are assigned to one of the following six House Teams: Best Practices/Standards, Environmental Scan, House Operations, Volunteer and Leadership Development, HIM Higher Education and Workforce, and Professional Development and Recognition. The House Teams advance the mission and strategy of AHIMA by addressing team charges throughout the year. Below is an update on the recent work of each team.

Best Practices/Standards Update
The Best Practices/Standards Team led by Lori A. Nobles, RHIA, and Renato L. Estrella, MSHA, RHIA, FAHIMA, is busy this delegate term in revisiting House of Delegates resolutions. They are currently working on the following resolutions: legal health record, managing the security of information, managing the MPI in an integrated delivery system, quality data and documentation in the EHR, improving the quality of healthcare data, enhancement of HIM academic program accreditation through CHEA recognition, and diversity. In addition to House resolutions, this team has been active in providing feedback on practice briefs and the revision of the code of ethics.

Environmental Scan Update
William Thieleman, RHIA, CHP, and Tim J. Keough, MPA, RHIA, co-chair the Environmental Scan Team. This team plans to conduct a webinar for CSA leaders about environmental scanning this month aimed at reviewing environmental scanning and the process for conducting the CSA environmental scan for 2011. Along with webinar preparation, this team identifies trends in the industry and sets priorities using sub-environments. The team is examining the environmental scan survey tool and methodology to identify best practices and lessons learned.

HIM Higher Education, Workforce Update
The HIM Higher Education and Workforce Team is headed by Karl J. Koob, RHIA, CPEHR, FAHIMA, and Wade E. Lowry, RHIT. The most notable work of the team was the completion and distribution of the Clinical Practice Sites/PPE Guide, version 2. The guide is divided into specific areas to provide information and best practices to students, academic faculty or programs, and HIM practitioners on the expectations for the clinical practice sites and PPEs. The underlying goal is for clinical practice sites, educational institutions, and students to partner together to create a meaningful experience for all involved. In addition, the team is planning and raising awareness for the need of more affiliation PPE sites and educators in the HIM workforce.

House Operations Update
April D. Robertson, MPA, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA, and Debbie Mackaman, RHIA, CHCO, provide co-chair leadership for the House Operations Team. The team provides oversight for the operations of the House of Delegates. Some of this year’s work includes performing a gap analysis on delegate resources, reviewing delegate surveys results, and overseeing the House of Delegates performance measures.

Professional Development, Recognition Update
Co-chairs Kathy E. Arner, RHIT, CCS, LPN, CPC, CPMA, MCS, and Sue Jensen, RHIT, manage the Professional Development and Recognition Team. The team is currently working on two projects. One is developing a customizable C-level letter in response to job advertisements for roles that HIM professionals are qualified for but are not specifically being sought. The second project is creating a poster to recognize the value of the HIM credential.

Volunteer, Leadership Development Update
Our sixth team is Volunteer and Leadership Development. Donna Rugg, RHIT, CCS, and Kaelyn S. Coltrin, RHIT, are the co-chairs. The team reviewed and approved the latest version of the 10 executive/governance-level competencies in support of the online leadership academy. Currently, the team is working on creating a CourseShare learning packet for HIM educators on volunteerism.

Learn more about the House teams, visit the State Leaders and House community or contact House of Delegates Manager Sheryl Reyes at sheryl.reyes@ahima.org.
AHIMA Seeks Triumph Awards Nominations

Each year the AHIMA Triumph Awards are given out at the AHIMA Convention and Exhibit. It is a great honor to be nominated for and receive one of these prestigious awards. There are 10 different awards available: Distinguished Member, Champion, Community Outreach, e-HIM, Educator, Legacy, Mentor, Pioneer, Research, and Rising Star. Find out the descriptions, qualifications and the guidelines for nominations here. From this page, you can also review the list of past recipients including the 2010 recipients as well as the categories and nomination form.

Margaret Skurka, MS, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA, Distinguished Member for 2010 describes her thoughts about receiving this award. "I was very honored to receive the Distinguished Member Award in 2010, as being involved as a volunteer for the Association through the years was just truly a part of my life’s work. It is a responsibility we all have—to give back to the Association that gives us so much,” Skurka said.

Participate in 2011

Don’t miss out in 2011. AHIMA is seeking your help to ensure that worthy individuals are recognized. These awards honor the excellence, dedication, and service of those professionals whose steadfast efforts have bettered the HIM field. Learn more and download the online nomination form. Please note that the 2011 nomination deadline is June 1. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Render.

The 2011 AHIMA Triumph Awards will be presented at AHIMA’s Convention and Exhibit in Salt Lake City, UT.