20 Ways to Survive an Audit

Sharon Easterling, MHA, RHIA, CCS, assistant vice-president of the Enterprise RAC Department at Carolinas Healthcare System in Charlotte, NC, responds to record requests from external auditors faster than you can say “hot potato.” But this is no child’s game. Inquisitive audit entities are aggressively searching for improper payments and insurance fraud—and millions of dollars are at stake.

“When it comes to these audits, the livelihood of your organization is at risk,” said Easterling, a contributor to AHIMA’s Understanding Governmental Audits toolkit, and author of the Journal of AHIMA’s “RAC Forensics 101” article series. “Across the nation, audits are coming from everywhere. These entities realize money can possibly be recovered and are ramping up efforts to make it happen. Healthcare organizations need to have some type of internal environment to handle this intense scrutiny.”

Audit-palooza

The number of auditing bodies is mind-boggling. A large organization may juggle five or six different audits at a time. Many audits come from different branches of the federal government. The most well-known is the Medicare Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) Program. Medicaid will also roll out its own RAC Program later this year. CMS’s Medicare Zone Program Integrity Contractors (ZPIC) scrutinizes settings such as physicians’ offices and nursing facilities. HHS’ Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) issue audits. And health insurance companies have entered the audit arena.

Unprepared organizations may potentially experience serious drops in revenue. No one wants to let money just blow out the window. But that’s what happens at some facilities, according to Donna D. Wilson, RHIA, CCS, CCDS, senior director at Compliance Concepts, Inc. in Wexford, PA.

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“There’s such a huge paper trail. Hospitals are short staffed and may decide to not appeal. My advice is it’s always worthwhile,” said Wilson, who wrote the 2010 AHIMA book Responding to a Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) Evaluation to help guide organizations. “Even low dollar denials add up over time when there is a large volume of the same denials. Keep in mind, the auditor may not always be correct. Therefore, fight the denial at the discussion level and avoid unnecessary recoupments. You’d be surprised how many times you will be successful. And, hopefully, the auditors will begin to back away,” she said.

Healthcare organizations are struggling to deal with the sheer volume of audits, according to Pat Maccariella-Hafey, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, CIRCC, director of education at Health Information Associates in Pawleys Island, SC. "So many entities are looking at different records. In some cases, they may be looking at the same records. The facility must have some way to track who is looking at what and for what reason,” she said.

Other problems include:
- Not enough manpower to meet audit deadlines.
- Confusion about the multiple different auditors and where their focus lies.
- Lack of standardization among auditors promotes unintentional missteps.
- Not enough resources to appeal decisions.
- Widespread belief that appealing denials is not worth the time.

**EHR: Tool or Roadblock?**

An EHR can facilitate audit responses—or impair them. As healthcare organizations implement new EHR systems to satisfy meaningful use incentive program requirements, they may not build in report functions and other outputs that are disclosed for an audit.

“To our knowledge, the EHR has helped to streamline the process. The EHR has allowed for faster processing of the medical records and easier tracking capability of those records,” said Kimberly Yelton, RHIA, CCS, supervisor, inpatient coding at WakeMed Health and Hospitals, Raleigh, NC.

On the flip side, some organizations may have a fully developed EHR, but can’t communicate delivery of services or medical necessity adequately to an auditor. Facilities may not be able to locate all EHR components, much less print a complete record. Even when they have all the pieces, printing can be laborious. And hybrid systems compound the troubles when there’s a mix of paper records and electronic systems to pull from. Certain EHRs may allow physicians to “copy and paste” from old records, making it difficult to determine what is actually being addressed this admission.

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In addition, organizations should understand how their EHR speaks to the auditor. “You want the EHR to say the same thing as your paper record does,” said Easterling. “But it’s going to say it a little differently. For example, in the paper world, a nurses’ note may have included a freehand synopsis. However in most EHR systems, there are only drop down boxes or fields to click. And the question is, “Can she adequately express the patient’s condition with those boxes or fields?”

All about Audits
Here are 20 ways you can help your organization handle audits more successfully.

Responding to Audits
1. Train staff to recognize audit letters. Establish procedures to manage incoming requests and work on them immediately.

2. Study up on the auditor. Identify who is auditing your organization, and look for that auditor’s hot spots. The AHIMA Communities of Practice, such as Recovery Audit Contractor, Coding, and Coding Hospital Inpatient, are a good source of information.

3. Prep records. Don’t frustrate the auditor with mounds of electronic documents, advised Easterling. Arrange the record chronologically so it reads like a book (especially important for medical necessity cases). “I want my record to show how sick my patient was when he presented to my admitting doctor and what happened in those initial hours to justify an inpatient admission,” she explained. Call attention to critical pieces of documentation with tabs and underlining.

4. Check completeness. “If the physician hasn’t dictated the discharge summary yet, I’ll ask the physician to dictate so I can mail the record off,” said Easterling. Documentation should support the services billed, including key pieces like labs or radiology exams.

5. Keep vendors accountable. “If you work with an external vendor to copy records, make sure they meet deadlines. I’ve seen the process fall apart there,” said Wilson.

6. Make a paper trail. “Send audit documentation certified mail with a return receipt, FedEx, or some other way that ensures you have a receipt, so the auditor can’t come back and say, you missed the deadline—which could result in a technical denial and dollar recoupment of the entire stay,” said Wilson.

Setting up Ongoing Policies and Processes
7. Develop a tracking tool for following the status of each audit. “Tracking is one of our biggest challenges. We have a homegrown, Web-based system that helps us manage the process. That’s a huge key,” said Easterling.

8. Monitor data quality continually. Don’t wait for an audit to flag your data. Perform internal and external coding and documentation audits and pre-bill reviews. “Target DRGs that the RAC has been known to review, such as respiratory failure records and excisional debridements,” said Maccariella-Hafey.

9. Tap HIM expertise. Review denials with coding staff related to coding or DRGs. If there are issues with coding, have HIM professionals, handle those letters. Consider setting up a dedicated audit response position staffed by an HIM professional.

10. Educate physicians on providing complete, clear and concise documentation. “Review entities are starting to focus
on situations where the physician has not indicated the need for a change in level of care. Encourage physicians to provide reasons that support medical necessity for inpatient admissions and complete admission orders," said Maccariella-Hafey.

11. Build reporting and printing capabilities into the EHR. Work with the EHR design team to ensure that drop down boxes and fields reflect clinical observations that support medical necessity.

12. Be a detective. When you receive audits or denials, look for patterns, advised Wilson. Are you continually getting denied on cases where pneumonia is listed as the secondary diagnosis? Is there a pattern of poor documentation or illegible handwriting from certain physicians? Do you need to engage the clinical documentation improvement (CDI) specialist?

13. Create policies to navigate the denials and the appeal processes. Consider outsourcing to companies that manage the denial process.

**Taking Advantage of AHIMA Resources**


16. Audio Seminar, *RAC Current Events: Medical Necessity, 72-Hour Rule, and Other Program Initiatives* by Bridgette Kreuder, RN, CCS, and Deborah Mallon, RN, MPA, CCS, CCS-P

17. Practice Brief, *Understanding Government Audits*, 2011. (Toolkit to come later this year.)


**Disability Won’t Stop Future HIM Professional**

Jen Onsum is going to become an HIM professional. Nothing, not even muscular dystrophy, will keep the tenacious 30-year-old from that goal. Though confined to a wheelchair and requiring the aid of personal assistants for typical day-to-day needs, Onsum has never let her disease get in the way of her dreams.

Currently a student at Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Onsum plans to graduate in mid-2012 with an associate’s degree in health information technology. She hopes to get a job as a trauma registrar or inpatient coder, a profession well within her physical capabilities thanks in part to the electronic health record.

“With some simple modifications and creative thinking there’s a lot I’m able to do independently,” she said. “Nowadays pretty much everything is electronic and in some shape or form involves working on a computer. That is one of the things that attracted me, because HIM seemed like an extremely feasible line of work for me.”

**Learning the HIM Basics**

This summer Onsum is learning HIM firsthand during her professional practice experience at the Twin Cities-based Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota. She's picked up a lot—be thorough and detailed when coding, maintain good communication with providers, and no day or patient is ever the same.

HIM will be her second career. For five years Onsum worked in public relations, but decided to go back to school to pursue her true passion—healthcare. For Onsum, random diseases, symptoms, treatments and procedures are quickly at mind’s reach. Likely this talent is due to her many years spent in the hospital.

**A Unique Understanding**

“I grew up spending considerable time around doctors and nurses in the hospital environment, and I think because of that I’ve always been fascinated by health and medicine,” she said. She’s received treatment for muscular dystrophy since she was a baby and feels her experience will provide a unique edge as an HIM professional. The importance of healthcare is evident to Onsum, and she hopes her work as an HIM professional will contribute to better patient care. “HIM might not have a direct impact on an individual patient, but the information gathered can be analyzed and used to improve the quality of care being delivered to all patients,” she said.

A disability is not an excuse to forgo trying, Onsum believes. She faces obstacles. But she’s found ways of “getting over them, or going around them” in the pursuit of life.

**Leading by Example**

Onsum leads by example, volunteering with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and working with kids at a muscular dystrophy camp. “It’s important for me to show others that it is possible to be active and encourage them to get out and maximize their potential,” she said. “If (kids) can see at a young age that they can go to college, get a job, and be independent, they too will achieve their goals and dreams.”

Life won’t always be easy, but if you are willing to try, Onsum says, you can do anything you set your mind to. She just may need to do things differently than the average person. “I feel everyone has the potential in them to be somebody and pursue their goals and dreams, no matter what your disability is,” she said, “just because you’re disabled that doesn’t mean you can’t do anything and be active in society.”
Its hard to believe that Congress’ annual August District Work Period, or August recess, has already arrived. This is a great opportunity for AHIMA’s component state associations to continue their advocacy efforts back home in their respective states and congressional districts. With an entire spring session of Advocacy 101 webinars completed, we are excited about the level of interest that AHIMA’s members have shown in taking our issues to policymakers. During the August congressional recess, there is much we can do to advance both the HIM profession and AHIMA.

Schedule Your Own Advocacy Event

Not everyone can join AHIMA’s annual Hill Day in Washington, DC. Even so, that does not preclude you from meeting with your elected officials back in your state and congressional district. August is an outstanding time to schedule a meeting with your senators and representatives; their primary objective is to be at home working with their constituents.

Not only can you introduce yourself, your CSA, and AHIMA, but you can also address some of the important topics facing the association such as workforce, health information exchange, ICD-10, and patient identity. Resources for these and other topics can be found in the AHIMA Community of Practice under the heading “AHIMA 2011 Hill Day.”

One of the issues raised during the Advocacy 101 training sessions was the importance of letting the policymakers know that they have HIM and health information technology content experts at home—YOU!

There is no better way to emphasize this to policymakers than have them visit you at work. Invite them to your facility; whether it is a hospital, physician office, healthcare facility, or a college or university. What better way to show your elected officials what you do on a day-to-day basis and how public policy does or does not impact your profession.

Some examples can include:

- the impact of meaningful use
- your health record system (whether electronic, paper, or hybrid)
- your privacy and security protocols for protecting health information
- the internal and external health information flows
- involvement with health information exchanges
- your HIM/HIT education curriculum
- the classroom setting and experience

The important thing is to show your policymakers the real world; your experiences, challenges, and expertise. In this way, you can become a valued resource for the HIM profession, your facility, and policymakers.

It is possible that a policymaker may be too busy to meet with you or visit your facility, but that does not mean they are not accessible. If they cannot come to you, go to them. During their district work periods they are normally very active attending town hall meetings, social gatherings, and other public events. Their schedule is normally posted on their Web site and sometimes printed in the local newspapers.

Attending these events and creating dialogue with the senator, representative, or their staff member can have very beneficial outcomes. And, do not hesitate to take some friends or co-workers with you. It was noted during the Advocacy 101 sessions that there is power in numbers.

Upcoming Advocacy, PR Training

There is no time to stop doing advocacy. Therefore, there is no time to stop learning about advocacy. With the Advocacy 101 sessions behind us, it is time to take the next step and learn about Advocacy and Public Relations. The Advocacy and Public Relations training is for all AHIMA members who have an interest who may have an interest in advocacy. The dates and times are as follows:

- August 10 at 1 p.m. EDT
- August 16 at 4 p.m. EDT
- August 25 at Noon. EDT

The training is free and can be done right at your computer. E-mail AHIMA’s Washington, DC, office coordinator Mary Ellen Largess and let her know which session will work for you and we will forward the WebEx meeting information.

The sessions will be hosted by AHIMA’s Director of Government Relations Don Asmonga and AHIMA’s Director of Public Relations Craig May. They will focus on the important role that public relations plays in the advocacy process.

AHIMA is intent on building and strengthening our advocacy efforts and continuing to develop and promote advocacy training. Contact AHIMA’s Director of Government Relations Don Asmonga with any questions.
Gear Up for AHIMA’s Upcoming Convention

HIM professionals at all career levels and from across the globe are preparing to gather at the HIM event of the year. The 83rd AHIMA Convention and Exhibit, October 1–6, in Salt Lake City, UT, is the place to learn best practices, get up to date on emerging issues, acquire new ideas, and brainstorm with both experts and your peers. A one-stop meeting for those who teach, manage, and regulate health records and data, the AHIMA Convention and Exhibit is focused on guiding attendees to reach new heights in health information. The week-long program will deliver critical updates on issues affecting the profession and provide enriching networking experiences.

“The annual convention is my major source of information for just about everything that’s important in the industry,” said Genet Kidane, RHIA, a previous convention attendee.

Exciting Educational Tracks

HIM professionals attending the convention will receive a comprehensive overview of current and emerging trends in health information management, as well as access to tools that will help them learn and implement some of the most important changes in the history of the profession. Educational tracks include ICD-10, electronic health records, health information exchange/return on investment, HITECH, workforce management, clinical documentation improvement, leadership, physician practice, meaningful use, revenue audit contractors, privacy, security, compliance, and many other emerging issues affecting the HIM profession.

Beneficial Exhibitor Interaction

More than 200 exhibitors will be present to provide hands-on demonstrations and interaction with software, technology and process solutions designed to improve workflow efficiencies. “The Convention and Exhibit is an excellent source of current, up-to-date information on my profession and I really enjoy the vendor exhibits,” said Rebecca A. Buegel, RHIA, CHP. “Having the opportunity to meet with so many vendors at one time is an excellent use of my time and gave me access to vendors I may not have been able to otherwise meet.”

Stimulating Keynote Speakers

Attendees will also gain inspiration and motivation from keynote speakers, including:

- Leadership guru Steven M.R. Covey, New York Times and #1 Wall Street Journal bestselling author of The Speed of Trust
- Apolo Anton Ohno, eight-time Olympic speed skating medalist, and “Dancing with the Stars” champion
- Olympic speed skating medalist, and “Dancing with the Stars” champion

“I’ve attended AHIMA conventions and they’ve always been helpful. It’s great to meet others and hear the latest and greatest about the field.”

Sue Powell, RHIA

Pre and Post-Convention Activities

In addition, numerous pre- and post-convention activities and workshops held at the convention venue will allow convention attendees the opportunity to get up to date on numerous changes within the industry in just one week.

The Clinical Coding Community Meeting, which immediately precedes the convention on October 1–2, is a must-attend event for new and experienced coders. Held for the first time jointly with the American College of Medical Coding Specialists (ACMCS), the meeting focuses on policy and coding updates. Featured topics include ICD-10 preparation, managing outpatient discharged not final billed, and compliance. This year a special ACMCS educational track will provide additional content of specific interest to physician-based coding professionals.

Also, held October 1-2, the Privacy and Security Institute is an intensive one and a half days session presenting practical knowledge and application and information analysis. Attendees will elevate their skills, gain insights, and learn how to tackle and overcome the compliance monitoring and risk assessment challenges facing privacy and security professionals.

Between and after sessions attendees can take advantage of all that Salt Lake City has to offer: fine dining, a rich cultural arts community, natural awe-inspiring parks, historical landmarks and a selection of well-known retail and unique shops.

The AHIMA Convention and Exhibit provides everything HIM professionals need to advance their careers—even the opportunity to earn a year’s worth of continuing education units during this information-packed week.

For more information on the 83rd AHIMA Convention and Exhibit, visit the AHIMA Convention Web site.
Congratulations to the 2011 AHIMA Triumph Award Recipients

The 2011 AHIMA Triumph Awards Committee has selected the recipients of the 2011 Triumph Awards. Congratulations to all the award recipients.

2011 AHIMA Triumph Award Winners

- **Distinguished Member**
  - Linda Kloss, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA

- **Champion Advocacy and Public Policy Award**
  - Linda A. Hyde, RHIA
  - MHIMA Legislative and Advocacy Team

- **Educator Award**
  - Laurinda Beebe Harman, Hoffer, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA

- **e-HIM Award**
  - Kimberly Baldwin-Stried Reich, MBA, MJ, RHIA, CPHQ
  - Tracy A. Elmer, RHIA

- **Leadership Award**
  - Dwan Thomas-Flowers, MBA, RHIA, CCS

- **Literary Legacy Award**
  - Jean S. Clark, RHIA, CSHA

- **Mentor Award**
  - Marie T. Conde, MPA, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA
  - Ginna Evans, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA
  - Patricia Pierson, RHIA
  - Kristi Stanton, RHIT, CCS, CPC

- **Pioneer Award**
  - William Lee Ford, MHA, RHIT, CPC, CPC-H, CHC

- **Student Award**
  - Sebrina Campbell, St. Louis University
  - Elizabeth Horn, Eastern Kentucky University
  - Dee Johnson, Araphahoe Community College
  - Roman Minyaylyuk, University of Illinois at Chicago
  - Alexandra Richards, Temple University

AHIMA Triumph Awards Committee Members

We wish to thank the 2011 Triumph Awards Committee for their dedication and hard work.

- **Chair**
  - Keith Olenik, MA, RHIA, CHP

- **Members**
  - Tracy L. D’Errico, RHIA
  - Susan P. Hanson, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA
  - Karen J. Lawler, MPS, RHIA
  - Desla R. Mancilla, MPA, RHIA
  - Catherine Porto, RHIA, CHP, CPEHR
  - Diane Premeau, MBA, RHIA, CHP
  - April D. Robertson, MPA, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA
  - Vera Rulon, RHIT, FAHIMA

2011 CoP Convention Activities

**CoP Training**

Hands-on demonstrations will take place October 3–5 at the AHIMA Booth (#338) in the exhibit hall so you can learn more about the Communities of Practice (CoP).

If you have a question on how to use these tools, please stop by during exhibit hours. CoP demonstrations are tailored for general users and facilitators.

- **CoP Meet Up**
  - October 2, 6–7 pm
  - AHIMA’s booth #338

- **CoP Networking Room**
  - October 3–4, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
  - Room 151 D

- **CoP Networking Room**
  - Long Term Care Community meeting: October 4, 2–3 p.m.

Visit www.ahima.org/events for more information on these and other AHIMA meetings.

**Upcoming Audio Seminars and Webinars**

Audio seminars last 90 minutes, beginning at 1 p.m. ET. Bundle up and save. Register for a Live + Web Replay bundle for just $40 more than the price of the live seminar, and you can attend the live seminar and access and share its Web replay version for future use at your facility.

- **August 11**
  - Wound Care CPT Coding and Reporting Without Pain

  *Presented in cooperation with ACMCS*

- **September 1**
  - FY12 ICD-9-CM Diagnosis and Procedure Code Updates

  *Presented in cooperation with ACMCS*

- **September 13**
  - Flowing from ICD-9-CM to ICD-10-CM: Coding Circulatory System Diseases

  *Presented with the support of 3M and in cooperation with ACMCS*

- **September 15**
  - FY12 CMS IPPS Update

- **September 22**
  - FY12 Rehab Coding and IRF PPS Updates

- **August 15–16**
  - Legal EHR Summit
  - Chicago, IL

- **September**
  - AHIMA Academy for ICD-10-CM/PCS
  - Multiple dates and locations
House of Delegates Meeting
The House of Delegates will meet on October 2 at the AHIMA Annual Convention and Exhibit. The House Teams will meet as well as having two separate action forum sessions. On the agenda for the business meeting are the following:

Five Action Items
- Resolution on Diversity and Inclusion
- MPI in an Integrated Delivery System Resolution
- Data Quality Management House Resolution
- Code of Ethics
- AHIMA Proposed Bylaw Revision
To view the agenda and for more information, visit the State Leaders and House community.

New AHIMA Fellow Announced
The Fellowship Review Committee has awarded AHIMA Fellowship to the following member. Based upon the review of her fellowship application the committee found her professional experience and background clearly demonstrate sustained and significant contributions to the health information management profession. Congratulations to Patty Thierry Sheridan, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA. The next Fellowship submission deadline is August 31. Learn more and complete the Fellowship Application.

AHIMA Unveils New Disaster Resource Web Site
The AHIMA Foundation has established the Health Information Relief Operation (HIRO) fund to provide support for HIM professionals when disaster strikes. AHIMA and the AHIMA Foundation express our support for the victims of the recent natural disasters across the country. HIM professionals in areas affected by disasters face a unique challenge as they struggle to piece back together their own lives while working to recover as much of their community's patient information as possible.

In the wake of these disasters, protecting and maintaining health information has become a key point for many of our members. AHIMA has developed a new disaster planning and recovery Web page to assist HIM professionals through recent and future disasters both man made and natural. Visit AHIMA's new Disaster Resource Web page.

New CDI Credential Coming Soon
The Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) is developing a new credential focused on clinical documentation improvement (CDI) professionals. The new credential will be launched this fall and will distinguish those professionals serving as clinical documentation specialists as knowledgeable and competent to provide guidance relative to clinical documentation in the patient’s health record, thus promoting the HIM profession overall. Learn more.

Immediate Scoring Now Available on CCA Exams
Are you planning to sit for the CCA exam this summer? The CCA exam re-launched with immediate scoring on July 7. Also, candidates bring their correct 2011 code-books to the exam. Candidates who arrive at the test center with incorrect codebooks will forfeit their exam fee. Learn more.

New Enterprise Content Management Book Available
AHIMA Press announces the publication of Enterprise Content Management and the Electronic Health Record by Sandra Nunn, MA, RHIA, CHP. This book is for healthcare professionals needing to understand the impact of ECM applications as they apply to e-Discovery, release of information, HIPAA, and many other compliance and regulatory demands. Enterprise Content Management and the Electronic Health Record also introduces foundational aspects of ECM and links ECM implementation to managing electronic health records.

Member News
The Michigan Health Information Management Association awarded the 2011 Mentor Award to Patricia A. Rubio, MSA, RHIA. Rubio is the Program Coordinator, Coding Specialist, Health Information Technology, Medical Assisting, Medical Transcription at Schoolcraft College in Garden City, MI. Nancy Walker, MS, RHIA, Director, Quality Health Record, Clinical Operations Improvement, has been chosen to receive the Michigan Health Information Management Association’s Distinguished Member Award for 2011.

Take Part in AHIMA’s 2011 Member Referral Program
AHIMA’s iShare program gives you all the benefits and opportunities of AHIMA membership. As an AHIMA member, you’ve enjoyed a host of career-enhancing membership benefits. Wouldn’t you like to share those benefits with your fellow professionals by bringing them on board as full members in the Association? Encourage them to join online. Make sure they provide your name and e-mail address on the online membership application to give you full credit for enrolling them. You’ll earn a chance to win one of three American Express gift card prizes: first prize is $1,000; second prize is $500, and third prize is $250. Learn more and don’t miss out.

Member Benefit: Liberty Mutual Home and Auto Insurance
AHIMA has teamed up with Liberty Mutual to offer you Group Savings Plus. Through this program, you can receive a special group discount on Liberty Mutual’s already competitive auto and home insurance rates. To see how much you could save through Group Savings Plus, call (800) 524–9400 for a free, no-obligation rate quote. Please mention client #113284.
Exploring the Role of Health Data Analysts

Mark Inge
CHDA

Are you responsible for developing data reports in your organization? Do you help to analyze health data to determine hospital trends or help predict auditor activity? Is it your responsibility to ensure management of the electronic health record, to include clinical vocabularies and system design? If you have answered yes to any of these questions, you may be completing the work of a health data analyst.

A Unique Background
For the past seven years, Mark C. Inge, CHDA, has been an employee at Lancaster General Health, an integrated healthcare delivery system serving the Lancaster County region of Pennsylvania.

Inge is a member of the reporting services team within the information services department. In his role, he participated in the multi-year implementation of their electronic health record. Lancaster General uses Epic Systems and elected to deploy their electronic medical record first into the ambulatory practices and then in the inpatient setting this past May.

Epic offers a self-service reporting utility called Reporting Workbench, which Inge helped to organize. Before long, he found himself in front of a classroom leading multiple training sessions. In addition, he uses structured query language to query Epic’s Clarity reporting database and Crystal Reports and BusinessObjects Enterprise to develop and schedule production and batch reports.

Finding a Home in HIM
Prior to beginning his career at LGH, Inge worked in television production. Taking advantage of Lancaster General Health’s tuition reimbursement benefit, Inge obtained a bachelor of science degree in information systems from nearby Elizabethtown College in 2010. He went on to complete the Office of the National Coordinator’s Health IT community college program in May 2011.

Like Inge, many people not currently working in HIM are finding a new professional home within the industry as a result of the national initiatives towards an EHR and health information exchange. Inge said, “Healthcare report writing needs to be recognized as more of a standards-based profession. As our industry becomes more data-driven, the ability to transform complex health data into accurate and timely information will be recognized as delivering real value to organizations.”

The Role of the CHDA Credential
AHIMA’s Certified Health Data Analyst (CHDA) credential launched in 2008 and is beginning to garner increased interest as a personal challenge and to set professional home within the industry as a result of the national initiatives towards an EHR and health information exchange. Inge said, “Healthcare report writing needs to be recognized as more of a standards-based profession. As our industry becomes more data-driven, the ability to transform complex health data into accurate and timely information will be recognized as delivering real value to organizations.”

Taking the Credential Plunge
When asked to share his advice to those considering taking the CHDA exam, Inge said, “Commit by scheduling a date then read the exam prep material and all the required readings,” he said. “Study hard and use the Communities of Practice discussion boards for moral support and as a general resource. You need to take the exam seriously, but on exam day, just give it your best shot and go for it.” Inge continues to maintain his CHDA credential and will be presenting with two coworkers at Epic’s user group meeting in September 2011, which draws over 4,000 attendees.

The best benefit is helping others getting into healthcare or transitioning from roles being phased out. There is lots of opportunity in the emerging field of health data analysis and reporting for enthusiastic young professionals as well as for those with many years of experience willing to adapt to new ways.”

The Role of the CHDA Credential
AHIMA’s Certified Health Data Analyst (CHDA) credential launched in 2008 and is beginning to garner increased interest for professionals in Inge’s position. He said, “I pursued AHIMA’s CHDA credential as a personal challenge and to set myself apart from entry-level professionals. The CHDA credential is my idea of the perfect two-way ticket. It affords entry into local and state HIM conferences, a treasure of great people with vast clinical content experience,” Inge said.

“The other pathway is technological, with development responsibility ranging from simple questions to complex projects and involving exciting new distribution platforms like the iPad,” he said. “From the career development angle, this combination of clinical education and technical know-how makes me very marketable.

The Student Advisory Council Update
The 2011–2012 AHIMA Student Advisory Council had its kick-off meeting in May with the introduction of Council members and AHIMA’s charge to the Council. The five Council members represent a good cross-section of AHIMA’s student membership and they have been busy working to identify relevant, informative, and interactive ways to meet the needs of today’s HIM students.

The first order of business has been organizing this year’s Student Academy, which will take place October 2 in conjunction with AHIMA’s 83rd Annual Convention and Exhibit in Salt Lake City, UT.

The focus for the Student Academy is not only to provide information on how students can get the most out of attending the convention but also offering speakers and breakout sessions that help attendees get the most of their HIM student experience and how students can set themselves up for success upon completion of their studies.

The Student Advisory Council is excited about the opportunity to network with the AHIMA student membership by sharing experiences, providing valuable information, and acting as the collective voice of HIM students across the country.
Is it Time to Reinvent Yourself?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for July was 9.2 percent (unchanged from June). However, healthcare employment continued to trend up in June (+14,000 new jobs), with the largest gain in ambulatory healthcare services. Over the last 12 months, healthcare has added an average of 24,000 jobs each month. A number of new jobs are being created to meet the needs of healthcare employers in order to manage sweeping regulation reforms such as 5010, ICD-10, and EHR implementations in acute care and physician practice groups.

Should you hold tight and do more of what you know or venture out and gain new and desirable skill sets? As career coach and founder of The Reinvention Institute, Pamela Mitchell has said, “your ability to change directions is your new job security. Even if you haven’t felt the recession’s impact yet, the more proactive you are, the better protected you’ll be if the other shoe drops.”

Workforce Development

Being agile gives you the ability to move into new positions that weren’t even invented a year ago. But in most cases, that agility requires additional training; either through professional continuing education opportunities, or by returning to school and enrolling in a formal academic program. Start with an assessment of what you really enjoy doing (or think you would enjoy) and identify the new skill sets you’ll need to compete for this kind of job. AHIMA offers a variety of e-assessments to help you measure where your skill baseline is today. Next, look through professional journals and online career sites such as AHIMA’s Career Assist to see what jobs are advertised and the descriptions used in their want ads. Use those ads to help you focus on a fresh rewrite of your resume—incorporating those new skill sets.

Reinventing a HIM Practitioner

There are many ways to enhance your professional skill sets, but here are some opportunities that you may not yet be aware of:

1. Get an advanced degree in health information and informatics management (HIIM). There are six CAHIIM accredited HIIM master’s programs and additional programs in health informatics at the doctoral level.

2. Add another specialty to your RHIT credential. The Cancer Registry Management program is available as an e-learning program at AHIMA Distance Education. Six courses help students become eligible to sit for the NCRA’s Certified Tumor Registrar certification exam.

3. Add to your CCS and CCS-P credentials by attending an AHIMA Academy for ICD-10 meeting and become a trainer for other coders.

4. Jump into new health IT roles by taking online courses through a community college that is part of the HITECH college consortium. These six-month training programs offer training in six health IT roles so that you can select the role that is the best fit for your skills and background.

Additional AHIMA Career Resources

- E-assessments
- AHIMA Career Assist
- CAHIIM Accredited Program Directory
- HI Careers Toolbox
- Cancer Registry Management
- ONC Health IT Training Programs

PPE Mentors Wanted

Every year, thousands of HIM students begin the search for a field-based professional practice experience (PPE). Finding a site is critical for the student to make the leap from classroom theory to professional practice. Making that connection is crucial to their future success.

Practitioners soon discover the value of students that deliver the latest knowledge and skills. Eager to give their best, students immerse themselves with the work assigned by bringing passion, talent, and ability to serve. Each staffer with an AHIMA credential that mentors a student will receive five continuing education units per year. This is a great way to add to your annual CEU requirement while fulfilling a fundamental obligation of the profession.

In today’s environment, change is coming at a fast pace and this generation will soon become an extraordinary asset in advancing the HIM profession. This is your time to help mold the future leaders in HIM. To become a PPE site mentor; click here to sign up today.
Global Services Office Develops, Maintains Key Relationships

The AHIMA Global Services Office (GSO) has been very busy in the past months in meeting with stakeholders, ally associations, and official institutions. Below are a few highlights of recent activities.

European American Business Council
AHIMA recently became a member of the European-American Business Council (EABC), which is a trans-atlantic alliance of major United States and European Union-based corporations. Recent activities include the participation to a preparatory meeting for the trans-atlantic Economic Council (TEC), a body set up between the European Union and the US to direct economic cooperation between the two economies and develop a position paper on recommended actions following the EU/US Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on e-Health.

Stakeholder Meetings on Workforce Development
In November 2010, at the urging of European Commission officials, AHIMA took the initiative to organize a roundtable discussion with the objective to bring all stakeholders (policymakers as well as ally associations and some industry representation) together to discuss the need to create a skilled HIM workforce in Europe and most importantly to discuss which joint steps could be taken to address this problem. In May, a conference call was held to discuss the recent developments with regards to e-Health, which also have an impact on the skilled HIM workforce, and to update on policy developments. It was decided that a database for the existing curricula from the various associations should be established. During the follow up meeting on June 22, the different stakeholders presented their existing curricula that were already in place. It was agreed that the different stakeholders strongly desire to create a formal alliance and the first joint initiative will be the compilation of the different curricula available by means of an online portal. The next steps are to draft the outline of approach and concept. Once this is finalized a communication strategy will be developed in order to ‘create’ the market.

Key Representation
AHIMA was a supporter of the World Health Care Congress-Europe, held in Brussels in April and which attracted senior international executives and government officials to discuss healthcare business innovation.
In May, the European Federation of Medical Informatics (EFMI) organized its annual Special Topic Conference in Slovenia. AHIMA was a promotion partner to the event and AHIMA’s GSO director participated to a roundtable discussion on “Cross Border e-Health Connections” and AHIMA had a dedicated speaking slot to promote its services and activities.
AHIMA also was represented at the closing meeting of the ARGOS e-Health project (Transatlantic Observatory for Meeting Global Health Policy Challenges through ICT-enabled Solutions) which took part in the framework of the World of Health IT Conference in Budapest in May. Workforce development was originally not one of the four key priorities of the project, but was added as a result of AHIMA’s involvement and the leadership direction. EU officials decided that AHIMA should address this topic as a priority through the ARGOS project. AHIMA’s director of practice leadership Rita Scichilone, MHSA, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, CHC, was invited to give a presentation on workforce challenges. The four policy areas were discussed and conclusions were reached on each of them:
1. Virtual Physiological Human
2. Semantic Interoperability
3. Metrics
4. Certification
Following the meeting the final versions of the policy briefs were written based on the discussions that took place. The ARGOS project will be concluded with a book, and Scichilone submitted an article entitled “eHealth Information Management and Informatics Workforce Challenges for Europe.”
In June, AHIMA also participated at the EABC/US Mission update forum with industry representatives and officials from the US Mission, which led to some good corporate contacts. Finally, member of the European Parliament Cristina Gutierrez-Cortines met with AHIMA and is seeking AHIMA’s advice in starting up some pilot projects in Spain. More updates on this project will be forthcoming. To learn more about AHIMA’s global activities or to get involved, contact the office.
Upcoming AHIMA Bylaws Revision

Based on discussions at the 2010 Leadership Conference, the AHIMA Board of Directors retained the services of the firm of Sonnenschein Nath and Rosenthal, LLP to review the AHIMA Bylaws. Specific areas the firm reviewed include:

- Board of Directors authority and fiduciary responsibility
- House of Delegates purpose
- CAHIIM and CCHIIM affiliate relationships
- Illinois state law and corporate law practice

A Governance presentation at the 2011 Winter Team Talks started the revision process and a draft was developed. The House Operations Team as well as the Board of Directors reviewed and provided comments. In addition, information has been posted on the State Leaders and House of Delegates, AHIMA Board of Directors, and Board Alumni Communities of Practice. Members reviewed the draft, side-by-side comparison, and FAQs before sharing comments.

A version of the Bylaws was presented to the participants of the 2011 Summer Team Talks and time for feedback was incorporated into the agenda. The Bylaws will be an action item on the House of Delegates agenda October 2 during the AHIMA Annual Convention and Exhibit in Salt Lake City, UT. Other action items will include a revision of the Code of Ethics and three resolutions.

You are invited to review the Bylaws revision materials within the State Leaders and House community. Materials include: frequently asked questions, a side-by-side comparison, and the current and proposed bylaws. Contact your delegates, ask questions, or post your feedback in the CoP. Your voice counts.

AHIMA Member Recounts Successful Job Search

Are you looking for a job? Wondering how others are starting their HIM careers in a slow economy? We recently interviewed AHIMA member Rachel Gifford, RHIA, to get a new professional’s perspective on entering the HIM field.

What made you decide on a HIM career?
My mother told me about HIM because her best friend works in the field. I had always wanted to be in healthcare, but I could never do the clinical component. I researched HIM and was immediately intrigued. After speaking with professionals and alumni, I discovered there were vast opportunities in the HIM field and I began to feel like this was the right path for me.

How did you get your foot in the door with HIM?
It took me about a year to find work in the HIM field. My first opportunity came as a release of information specialist with Verisma Systems, Inc. I was there for about six months and I am now working for Bravo Health as a coding specialist. Bravo Health is currently in the beginning stages of a retrospective coding review of the charts of our providers.

What was your biggest motivation to find a job?
Locating a job was a challenge, especially being a recent graduate and a newly credentialed individual. I didn’t have any experience other than the internships I did as part of my studies, so I was constantly getting rejected. It was a struggle to find an employer that would look past my lack of experience and choose to give me a chance based on my knowledge. My biggest motivation was probably the fact that my professors, internship supervisors, and work superiors would commend me for being a hard worker; I knew that eventually an employer would see that as well. I also reminded myself that it was a tough economy for everyone, even those with experience.

What advice would you give students working towards a HIM degree?
Don’t be afraid to network and get your name out there. It’s important to meet other people in the field, whether it’s a part of HIM that you want to work in or not. By meeting people, you learn about opportunities and aspects of HIM you may not have even known about. Work hard and don’t be afraid to ask for clarification on anything you don’t understand. There are always review books or practice exams for any domain you’re looking to learn more about.

Is there anything else you’d like to share?
If you have the opportunity to volunteer, do it; even if it’s filing or purging records. Experience is important, no matter how non-glamorous it may seem. Don’t give up; the economy and the job market are tough, but if you are persistent and have a positive outlook, the right job will come to you.
ECEM Author Offers Tips for Data Management

Why are you personally interested in ECM?
ECM presents such incredible opportunities to those of us who want to apply information management skills to virtually limitless repositories of information generated by technologies like SharePoint, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, etc.

What is one challenge many organizations don’t realize they will face as they transition from paper to electronic records systems?
In the rush to turn all records into electronic files, many organizations do not realize the enormity of the vast repositories of electronic files they are creating. There is a lot of organizational excitement about how much money will be saved when records are all electronic, when in reality, there will be substantial cost in indexing and organizing hundreds of thousands of files in order for any information to be located in the morass of information.

In addition, there has been virtually no thought to retention management for electronic records and the methods that will be necessary to retain only what is legally necessary from a business perspective. One of the reasons cloud technologies have become necessary is that businesses have failed to manage the creation, organization, and eventual destruction of their information.

What is a simple way to define what enterprise content management is?
ECM is an umbrella term covering document management, Web content management, search, records management, digital asset management, work-flow management, capture, and scanning. ECM is primarily aimed at managing the life-cycle of information from initial publication or creation all the way through archival and eventual disposal.

Who is the intended audience for your book?
HIM professionals exploring how to take knowledge acquired through the development of EHRs to extend HIM management to other information domains in their organizations. The book also presents potential alternative information management career paths for HIM professionals. The skills learned by HIM professionals regarding records management, retention, and destruction can be applied to any records, including those contained in an ECM system.

What are some HIM roles within ECM?
Content creators and/or editors assisting enterprise knowledge workers to post content into content management systems or onto Web sites (Web content management)
Records managers for administrative content throughout the information lifecycle (responsibility for maintenance of the organizational retention schedule)
Librarians of organizational content (tagging of repository content according to organizational information domains)

What has been the biggest enterprise content management problem you have faced to date?
I think the biggest challenge facing ECM is the lack of familiarity with what the technologies comprising it can do and how they can reduce costs in organizations and facilitate the implementation of EHRs.

The economic climate is such that healthcare organizations are devoting most of their IT funds to the implementation of EHRs and ICD-10 transitions when even small amounts of investment in ECM products can save organizations large amounts of money through the decommissioning of legacy systems and destruction of unnecessarily retained information.
Disaster Management Resources, CoP Here to Help

AHIMA has created a new Disaster Planning and Recovery Web page with a number of resources available. This information includes advice for not only preparing for a disaster, but providing the necessary follow up after a disaster as well. Regardless if the disaster is manmade or created by nature, there are resources available to help the HIM professional plan, prepare, and recover.

AHIMA Resources Lend a Hand

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Additionally there is a Disaster Management Community of Practice (CoP), dedicated to members preparing their facilities for a disaster as well as post disaster. It was created in 2005 after hurricane Katrina hit the southeast. Franklin Kribbs first suggested the community and has been a facilitator ever since.

Members began sharing resources to help those in need as well as sharing tips for disaster preparedness. Members asked questions such as “how do I dry out the records I have in a confidential manner?” Depending on the type of disaster, different issues will need to be considered. After the tornadoes this past spring, AHIMA staff members Julie Dooling, RHIT, and Diana Warner, MS, RHIA, CHPS, FAHIMA, began sharing resources on the community to help members find important resources. The CoP is a valuable resource for our members. Sharing experiences, tips, tricks and lessons learned whether manmade or through nature will help others when the unexpected disaster strikes.

AHIMA Staff Responds

After a tornado destroyed a large portion of Joplin, MO, including a direct hit to St. John’s Regional Medical Center, Dooling thought about what she and AHIMA could do for the hospitals and her fellow HIM professionals. Dooling has been key in contacting the HIM professionals in Joplin in the tornado’s wake and has gone to Joplin and nearby communities to hand deliver disaster resources from AHIMA.

Since May 23, Dooling has successfully reached out and engaged many HIM professionals in the city of Joplin, members of the Missouri component state association, and many of the hospitals. She has been compiling names of affected members as well as external and AHIMA resources. The information Dooling has obtained from victims of the storm has been vital to the professional practice resources team as they assist members in this area.

Dooling and Warner worked together to create the “Disaster Planning and Recovery Resources for HIM” guide which includes practice briefs, articles, internal and external resources related to disaster. This guide, in addition to a copy of the book Medical Records Disaster Planning, a Health Information Manager’s Survival Guide, was hand delivered to six HIM directors at hospitals in the Joplin community.

According to Dooling, “While we cannot predict or prepare for every contingency that may arise from a disaster, we can help our members by providing timely resources to guide them through the planning process and learn from those who have unfortunately experienced disaster first hand.” Prepare your facility for the future using all the great resources provided.

HIRO Fund

AHIMA, through the AHIMA Foundation, has established the Health Information Relief Operation (HIRO) Fund to assist communities of health information professionals whose personal or professional lives have been severely disrupted by a natural or man-made disaster. Learn more about the HIRO Fund as well as how you can donate or request financial assistance.
Get Certified Sooner Through Early Testing

Looking for a job can often seem like a daunting and impossible task. First conducting the job search, then applying, then waiting. The best way to get a job is to mold yourself into the ideal candidate. And who are the ideal candidates in the HIM profession? AHIMA-certified professionals.

“When I hire employees, I look for applicants with AHIMA’s credentials,” says Julie Swim, RHIT, CCS, coding manager at Central Baptist Hospital in Lexington, KY. “I have found that coders with AHIMA credentials have a solid foundation in the fundamentals and generally require less training time than coders without AHIMA credentials.”

The Value of Certification
Swim is not alone. Like many other employers, she prefers hiring AHIMA-certified professionals because AHIMA represents excellence. AHIMA exams have the necessary rigor to ensure that the new employees have a solid foundation in the fundamentals and generally require less training time than coders without AHIMA credentials.

Give Yourself an Advantage
Students currently enrolled in their final term of study in a CAHIIM-accredited program for an HIT or HIA degree should take advantage of AHIMA’s early testing program.

The early testing option provides successful candidates with a significant advantage immediately upon graduation. Their AHIMA credentials will distinguish them from other individuals in the employment pool who are applying for similar jobs.

Additionally, early testing gives students the optimal window for exam participation—to attempt the exam when they are best prepared. Statistics show that the earlier students test after graduation, the better they are likely to perform on their respective exams.

Ninety-one percent of early testers passed the RHIT on their first attempt compared to 83 percent of first time test takers in general. Similarly, early testers for the RHIA exam had a pass rate of 74 percent compared to 70 percent of general first-time test takers.

Students now in their final term of study and graduating at the end of the current term are eligible to take advantage of early testing. To apply for early testing, candidates must submit a paper application. Early testing candidates must also include a signed verification form from the program director. Then, upon graduating early testers must submit a copy of their official transcripts to complete the certification process.

Certification News

2011 CCS, CCS-P Exams Now With New Alternate Item Types
As HIM professionals know, coding accuracy is highly important to healthcare organizations. In fact, certification has become an implicit industry standard. Mastery-level coders like AHIMA Certified Coding Specialists (CCS) and Certified Coding Specialists-Physician Based (CCS-P), are the most experienced and most desirable to employers.

The exam will consist of single response multiple choice, multiple select, and quantity fill in the blanks. While the first of these item types is familiar to AHIMA candidates, the other two represent new exam approaches. In the multiple select item type, candidates are prompted to enter two or three responses, rather than only one. The final item type (multiple quantity fill in the blank items) will be used within a medical case record.

New online tutorials featuring the new item types are now available. The online tutorials walk through how to navigate each item type. To view the online tutorials visit the Certification Web site and scroll down to the “Guide to New CCS and CCS-P Item Types.”

In addition to the new item types, both CCS and CCS-P candidates are now required to use 2011 codebooks. Candidates who arrive at their exam appointment with incorrect codebooks will not be allowed to test and will forfeit their exam fees. For more information on the allowable codebooks for either the CCS or CCS-P exam, please visit the Certification Web site.

AHIMA Video Contest
Would you like to win a free certification exam? Free exam preparation guide? Or even a free iPad? Enter to win in the 2011 AHIMA Video Contest. To enter to win, just submit a video with the theme “Certification Turns Heads” by October 31. Read the contest details and contest rules.
Support the AHIMA Foundation at Convention

If you plan to attend this year’s AHIMA Convention and Exhibit in Salt Lake City, UT, be sure to reserve time on your schedule for all of the exciting programs that the AHIMA Foundation will be hosting.

Silent Auction
The annual AHIMA Foundation Silent Auction, supported by Medwrite and IOD Incorporated, is an important contributor to the Student Merit Scholarship program, and we encourage you to visit and bid often in the spirit of this charitable cause. In addition, the Foundation is also currently accepting donations for auction items through our [online donation form](#), and we would like to have a large display of unique items to encourage many donors to place bids. More information on supporting the Silent Auction can be found on the AHIMA convention Web site.

AHIMA Foundation Booth
The AHIMA Foundation booth is conveniently located in the Silent Auction area. You are invited to stop by to learn about AHIMA Foundation programs and research initiatives, make a contribution to the future of the HIM profession, network with colleagues, and enjoy the auction throughout convention.

AHIMA Foundation Second Annual Golf Outing “Fun-Raiser”
October 1
1–6 p.m.
Wingpointe Golf Course,
Salt Lake City, UT

This special event, supported by Presenting Sponsor Optum, brings together AHIMA members and corporate partners for an afternoon of networking, friendly competition, and outdoor fun. All golfers and sponsors participating in the outing will enjoy 18 holes of golf (with golf carts provided and clubs available for rent), a boxed lunch, a 19th hole reception, transportation to and from the golf course, and the knowledge that you are supporting an important industry cause. [Visit the Foundation Web site](#) for more information on the golf outing, and to download a registration form.

AHIMA Foundation Research Workshop
October 3
2–4 p.m.

Join the AHIMA Foundation for an informative, interactive session to discuss and learn more about exciting HIM research projects, as well as the Foundation’s research agenda. During this session, a panel of AHIMA researchers and Foundation research collaborators will present on studies related to HIM. Research topics covered in the session will include clinical informatics, performance measurement, electronic data methods, and comparative effectiveness research.

Thought Leaders Lecture Series

Thought Leaders is a lecture series established by the AHIMA Foundation that presents an opportunity for HIM professionals to engage with industry and opinion leaders on thought-provoking and cutting-edge topics. The Thought Leaders lecture at this year’s convention will take place on October 4 during the General Session, and was made possible through the generous philanthropic support of both Healthport and Precyse Solutions. The featured lecturer is Gail Collins, first woman appointed editor of the New York Times editorial page and New York Times syndicated opinion columnist and blogger, who will address the topic of “When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women From 1960 to the Present.”

We look forward to seeing you at all of these exciting Foundation events in Salt Lake City.

AHIMA Foundation HIRO Fund

Recently AHIMA and the AHIMA Foundation announced the creation of the Health Information Relief Operation (HIRO) Fund, an ongoing recovery source to assist HIM professionals whose lives and communities have been shattered by natural or man-made catastrophe. Provided they meet the eligibility requirements, AHIMA members in recently-declared disaster areas are invited to submit an application for up to $500 to assist in their efforts to return to work while recovering from the disaster.

This is not the last year that disasters will strike, but it will be the last year that victims of these tragedies have to do without the immediate support of their HIM colleagues—but only with your help and support of this important cause. For more information on the fund, to donate to the relief effort, or to download the assistance application, visit the AHIMA Foundation HIRO Fund Web page.
Leadership in Action at the Summer Meetings


Summer Team Talks was an interactive day of AHIMA strategy, HIM industry, House of Delegates reporting, key initiative reporting, and discussion. The Leadership Conference focused on leadership, skills development, and sharing Association best practices.

Best practices shared during concurrent sessions included sessions led by Component State Association (CSA) leaders to help other CSA leaderships. Over 20 topics were offered, many being linked to the CSA Core Service Achievements.

CSA Core Service Achievement Winners Announced

The CSA Core Service Achievement recipients were also announced at the Leadership Conference. This is the program’s seventh year which highlights those CSAs creatively excelling in CSAs core services. There were 47 applications for the eight categories with each category being reviewed by a panel of AHIMA members. The award winners are listed below.

Continuing Education Programs Relating to Coding

- First Place–Maryland
- Second Place–South Carolina
- Third Place–Florida

Continuing Education Programs Relating to HIM Practice Topics

- First Place–California
- Second Place–Washington State
- Third Place–Pennsylvania

Diversity Programs

- First Place–Louisiana

Legislative and Regulatory Advocacy

- First Place–Florida
- Second Place–Utah
- Third Place–Colorado

Member Communications

- First Place–South Carolina
- Second Place–Maryland and South Dakota (tie)
- Third Place–Minnesota

Recruitment and Retention Activities for Members

- First Place–Oklahoma
- Second Place–Montana

Recruitment and Retention Activities for Students

- First Place–Idaho
- Second Place–Oklahoma
- Third Place–Tennessee

Support for Local Accredited HIM Education Programs

- First Place–Michigan
- Second Place–Pennsylvania
- Third Place–Maryland