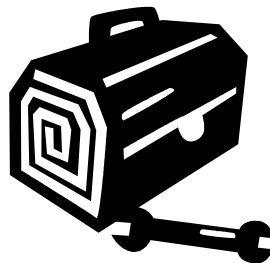


FHIMA

Student Tool Kit

2006



Developed March 2006 by the FIRE Committee

Turning Grads into Employees: Intern Program Delivers What Grads and Employers Both Want: Experience

by Meg Featheringham, assistant editor

If HIM graduates are in such demand, why is it so hard for them to find their first jobs? The reason, of course, is experience. Most employers require it, but few have the resources to develop it. At a time when employers seem to be finding as many challenges hiring as graduates find in being hired, a new recruiting program at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is experimenting with an old approach: internships.

Investing in Recruitment

The VA's two-year internship program was established in 2003, accepting four HIM interns its first year and 10 in its second. Interns are assigned an HIM manager who acts as a preceptor to guide them through their training. Each intern is allotted funding for travel for networking and educational opportunities such as conferences and site visits. Interns have the opportunity to be placed in positions within the VA at the end of the program, allowing the organization to fill roles with trained candidates.

Interns not only learn about the VA's HIM functions, they also receive exposure to its culture. "The VA is a very complex organization, and the HIM internship allows interns to experience what we are all about without having extreme job pressure," says Susan Helbig, MA, RHIA, preceptor and health information administrator at the VA Puget Sound in Seattle, WA. "At the end of two years, when they're ready to step into their first noninternship job, they already have much of that learning and exposure to our culture under their belt."

In looking at the VA's current HIM work force, Susan Lloyd, RHIA, chief of the health information and revenue department at the VA Medical Center in Augusta, GA, says, "I don't think we're unusual in that we have a lot of baby boomers like myself who are looking forward to retirement. We did a review before the program was initiated, and in 2002 we found that only 5 percent of employees were under 30—and that's out of over 350 people that the VA has working in health information. Over three-fourths of them were 40 or over, so we were really concerned that we were going to have this big mass of knowledge retire without having any succession planning in place."

The Intern Experience

The current interns are thrilled with the experience the program has afforded them. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," says Rebecca Ann Wirth, RHIA, who recently moved from the Seattle to the Bedford, MA, facility. "I get to learn what it's like to actually be doing the work and the day-to-day operations and functions, like release of information and coding and transcription. And I also get

to learn about the many different areas that HIM interfaces within the hospital and other departments are important and how we function as a HIM unit.”

Shawana Burch, RHIA, a medical records specialist at Augusta, concurs. “The wonderful thing about this internship and the wonderful thing that I love about my job is that I’m never doing the same two things in one day. I’ve been exposed to so many various different things by working here that it’s just been an awesome experience.”

A unique aspect of the program is each intern’s ability to customize his or her internship. “Certain aspects of HIM practice [the interns] are required to do, but...they each had a chunk of money for training and travel,” says Helbig. “As long as they consulted me and we talked over their travel proposals, they used the money to further their own professional development. One requirement for all the interns is to create a personal development plan, both short term and long term. All of these learning activities feed into that.”

Wirth explored different sites throughout the VA network, because “I know that each VA is different and they each have their own spectrum of patients that they see. I wanted to get a feel for what else was out there in the VA, and I went to several different places. I would shadow each of the people in the various HIM units and then also spend some time with their HIM chief and talk to them about different managerial issues and organizational structures.”

Adam Chin, RHIA, an intern at the Puget Sound facility, attended conferences to further his professional development. “I have had the opportunity to attend quite a few conferences—VA-sponsored conferences as well as outside-sponsored conferences. During the conferences, I had a chance to increase my knowledge of the HIM field, meet other VA HIM interns, and introduce myself to many HIM chiefs from different facilities.”

Finding Their Place

Wirth and Chin are already placed in positions at their new sites. Burch and Ken Green, RHIA, an intern in Augusta, both hope to be placed in positions at the VA. “It’s a great place to work,” Green says. His fellow HIM classmates are a bit envious of his internship at the VA, he says, “because of all the training opportunities that will open so many doors, not just today but way on down the road. They may be in a good job now, but it may be in a place that they can’t really advance and they can’t do but perhaps one specific path or one focus. This internship can take us in so many different directions.”

Helbig says it’s been an honor to act as a preceptor to her interns. “I wish everybody had an opportunity to be both an intern and a preceptor,” she says. “What a wonderful way to learn from the young people.”

Lloyd is eager for the day when the interns become her colleagues. “We’re really looking forward to all these bright young people who are going to be the future leaders in our field in the VA system.”

Meg Featheringham (meg.featheringham@ahima.org) is assistant editor of the Journal of AHIMA.

Navigating Your HIM Career: Beware of Churns and Roundabouts

by Rita A. Scichilone, MHSA, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, CHC

One of the oldest objects in my home is a butter churn that belonged to my great-grandmother. The sole purpose of this device is to agitate cream into butter. At the time it was used (around 1900), 40 percent of the American work force was needed to feed the nation. Today three American farmers provide the same output as 40 workers at the beginning of the 20th century. Technology and machines are the difference, and a similar revolution is under way in coding. Today economists use the term “churn” to describe the cycle that continuously redirects resources to new and more profitable uses. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 47 percent increase in the demand for health information technicians by 2012, an indication that the healthcare industry needs more HIM professionals as it expands, changes direction, and finds new technologies.¹ In the future few HIM professionals will remember how to assign codes in ICD-9-CM or manage health information services without computers. The economic churn in healthcare is creating new positions, but do they require the same skills and involve the same work?

Caution: Automation Ahead

A *Business Week* article titled “The Future of Work” outlines some work processes that can be “routinized”; that is, broken down into repeatable steps that vary little from day to day.² The key to surviving churn is to possess the ability to perform more complex tasks such as pattern recognition for data quality assessment and analysis of coded data for decision support and other uses. It is important to know where we are going and to prepare carefully for the trip to come. How will jobs change when information capture is performed in real time by computer applications at the point of care? Clinical information can be processed by language engines that work 24 hours a day without breaks or expensive employee benefits.

What happens when these systems begin paying for themselves by saving employers money that now pays for coders to review records and abstract data from charts the old-fashioned way? Will you be out of work? Is investment in your education, credentials, and efforts wasted? Research from MIT and Harvard University indicates that workers who exhibit flexibility, creativity, and lifelong learning commitment are spared from downsizing, replacement with software, or offshore outsource contracts.³ Those who embrace and adapt not only survive, but get ahead.

Watch for Undercurrents

Churning forces exist in the workplace, undercurrents coders must identify, accept, and be prepared to successfully negotiate. Advancement of electronic record systems and the increased use of software that produces coded data are just a few of the latest trends to be aware of in the HIM industry. Other churns include favorable salaries and working conditions for non-HIM professionals for coding and data management positions and the increased use of offshore labor or outsource contracts to meet demand. There is also a movement under way to implement new code sets and coding systems to replace old and familiar ICD classification in use for the past 25 years.

The tipping point for rapid change in the coding profession could be a decade away or in a few short years. With the advent of automated encoding systems, maps, and crosswalks, there is a need for experts in coding systems, especially those who understand both the old and new systems. The new roles are projected to require a higher-level data management function than in the past, because the job will require the management of coded data for a variety of users and functions beyond claims processing.

Clinical coding is a distinct language that will continue to be essential for communication throughout the healthcare delivery system. As clinical terminology systems like SNOMED-CT are adopted as core data standards, there will be an increased demand for individuals who understand the differences, similarities, and overlaps between coded data systems. If ICD-10 and SNOMED-CT are not in your professional development itinerary today, they should be.

Roundabouts: Perception versus Reality

Unfamiliar territory creates apprehension when you aren't sure where you may find yourself. We all want some confidence that when we set out to a new destination we won't lose our way. Transition to the e-HIM™ roles of the future is comparable to an encounter with an urban roundabout by a driver who is more familiar with the wide-open spaces of Interstate 80 across the Great Plains. Some of the major cities in the eastern part of the US use roundabouts as traffic controls. According to the New York Department of Transportation, "the lack of acceptance can generally be attributed to the negative experience with traffic circles or rotaries built in the earlier half of the twentieth century. Severe safety and operational problems caused these traffic circles to fall out of favor by the 1950s. However, substantial progress has been made in the subsequent design of circular intersections, and a modern roundabout should not be confused with the traffic circles of the past."⁴

When contrasted with conventional intersections, roundabouts result in shorter delays, increased capacity, improved safety, and better aesthetics, despite the initial concern by drivers that this type of intersection leads to more accidents. Today's coding professionals are entering a roundabout that will get them to where they want to go if they select the right turns in the process. It is human nature to be skeptical of change until the new methods are proven to be better than the current process. As HIM professionals we must guard against

the creation of our own obsolescence. New methods of encoding clinical data are inevitable, and we have to learn to use roundabouts along the career path or we may find ourselves lost or passed over by others more attuned to the demands of 21st century informatics.

Whether driving your car or the clinical data for a healthcare enterprise, changing from square corners to traffic circles requires experts at the wheel, educated passengers, and student drivers prepared for what lies ahead. HIM professionals are uniquely positioned to embrace and lead the way to better ways of managing patient data. One of the best ways to prepare for the roundabout ahead is to drive instead of allowing others to choose the route and control the destination. One of the major vehicles for job security involves new code sets and their integration into the electronic health record of the future. We need to be the voice of reality when others resist the change to better systems.

Keeping Current: The Latest Movements in HIM

“The [ICD-10 Preparation Checklist](#)” (*Journal of AHIMA*, June & July/August 2004) is a useful travel guide to gain confidence with new and improved data structures. ICD-10-CM has many similarities to ICD-9-CM, and skilled coding professionals need not fear the change.

The ICD-10-PCS system for reporting hospital inpatient procedures has two attributes not present in the ICD-9-CM Volume III system. ICD-10-PCS offers completeness in providing unique codes for all substantially different procedures. The ICD-9-CM classifications allow the same procedure performed on different body parts, with a different approach or a different type of procedure, to be assigned the same code. ICD-10-PCS also offers expandability: as new procedures are developed, new codes are easily incorporated as unique codes. The AHIMA work force data analysis is both reassuring and troubling for HIM professionals responsible for coding operations. Industry trends indicate that clinical coding and data processing work is on the list of jobs with the strongest growth potential. Even *Reader's Digest* reports that medical record technicians are in high demand.⁵ Survey respondents (about 96 percent of them) reported there were some or many vacant positions for coders in their region of the country.

As the churn continues and we face more roundabouts in the HIM career path, remember to be the expert at the wheel and use your GPS, cruise control, and other navigational tools. In other words:

- Learn all you can about data management techniques that use coded data.
- Explore the use of automated software for code assignment so you understand how it may affect current tasks and job descriptions.
- Become a technical expert in the new coding systems to position yourself in high demand as the industry looks to the future.
- Don't fear churn or the roundabout. If you know where the industry is headed and watch where you are going, you can avoid the off-ramp, serious crashes, and

obsolescence by following an updated road map and choosing a better route to job security.

Notes

1. Hecker, Daniel. "Occupational Employment Projections to 2012." *Monthly Labor Review*, February 2004. Available online at <http://stats.bls.gov/emp/home.htm>.
2. Coy, Peter. "The Future of Work." *BusinessWeek*, March 22, 2004. Available online at www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_12/b3875615.htm.
3. Ibid.
4. New York State Department of Transportation. "Modern Roundabouts." Available online at www.dot.state.ny.us/round-abouts/round.html.
5. Myer, Marc. "Who's Hiring? Check out These 15 Hot Jobs." *Reader's Digest*, April 2004, 116–23.

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New Member Profile Results Show HIM Careers Expanding

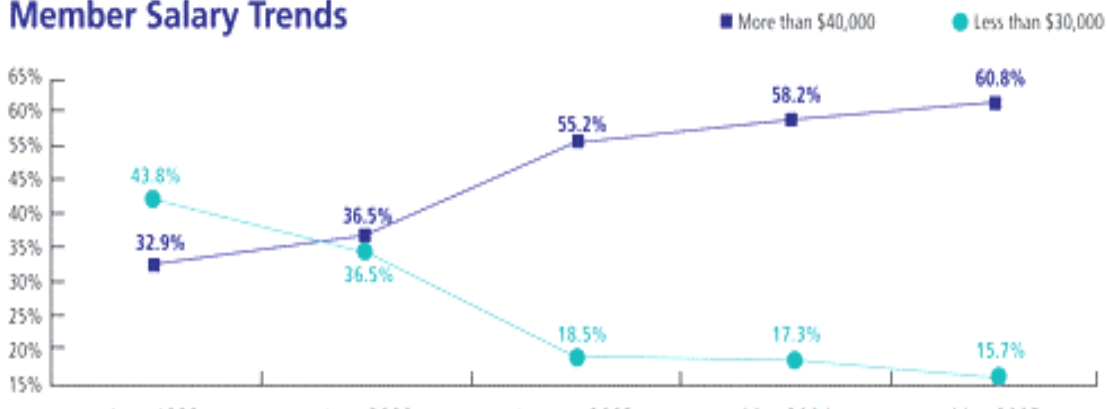
Updated Data as of May 2005

Can your credential, level of education, and job title affect how much you earn? A look at AHIMA's 2005 member profile data shows that all of these factors and more can affect an HIM professional's career. As the future of the profession continues to evolve and HIM professionals carve out new roles in an increasingly electronic environment, factors such as work setting, job title, location, credential, and level of education influence changing HIM careers.

The information in this article comes from data provided and updated by AHIMA members in their online profiles. This data set represents the profile data of more than 22,000 active, associate, and new graduate members of AHIMA as of May 2005. It represents 52 percent of this segment of the membership.

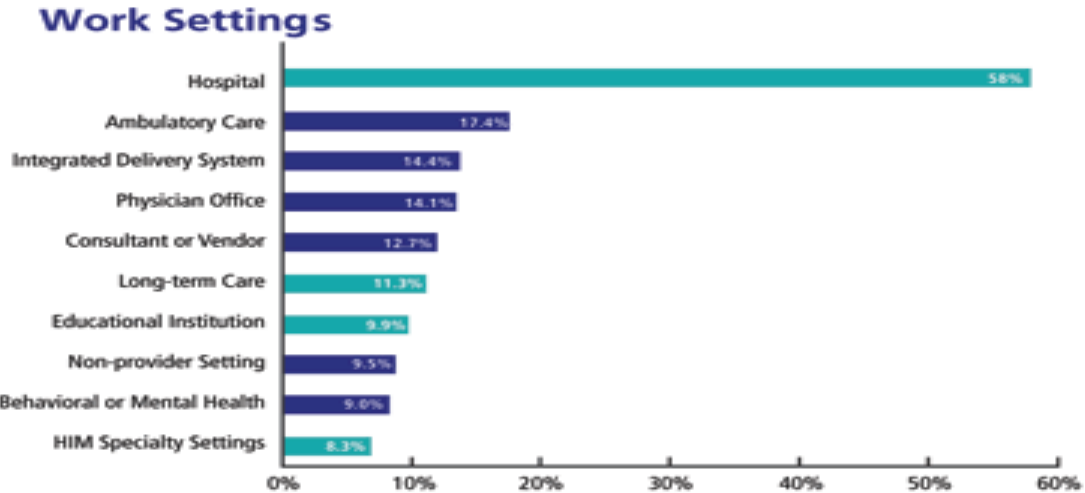
AHIMA membership continues to grow beyond the 50,000 mark. Although some of this growth represents HIM professionals in entry-level roles (for instance, those who have earned Certified Coding Associate credential), salary levels of AHIMA members continue to push forward. The graph on this page shows how salaries have grown during the past six years. In that time, the percentage of those reporting earning at least \$40,000 annually has nearly doubled and now represents more than six of 10 of the members represented. Correspondingly, the number of respondents earning on the lower end of the spectrum (>\$30,000 annually) has decreased 28 percent during this same time frame. At the upper end, 16 percent of this group report earning at least \$70,000 annually—a four percent increase in two years' time.

Member Salary Trends



Work Settings Impact Salary

An increasingly diverse HIM work force is employed in a variety of healthcare settings. The bar chart here shows the 10 main setting categories for HIM professionals. The profile allows members to indicate whether their work takes place in more than one setting or if they hold more than one job. Increasingly, HIM professionals are working in more than one setting—the data indicates an average of 1.6 settings per member.

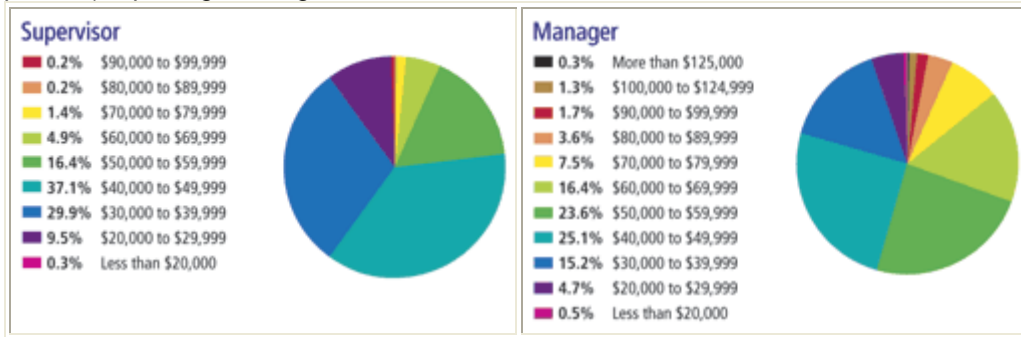


Clearly there are more HIM professionals in some settings than others, and the proportions continue to change. While the movement is not dramatic, over the last couple of years there has been some slight shifting of settings. The data shows slight decreases in percentage of those working in hospital and ambulatory care settings and increases in integrated delivery systems, physician offices, and HIM specialty settings.

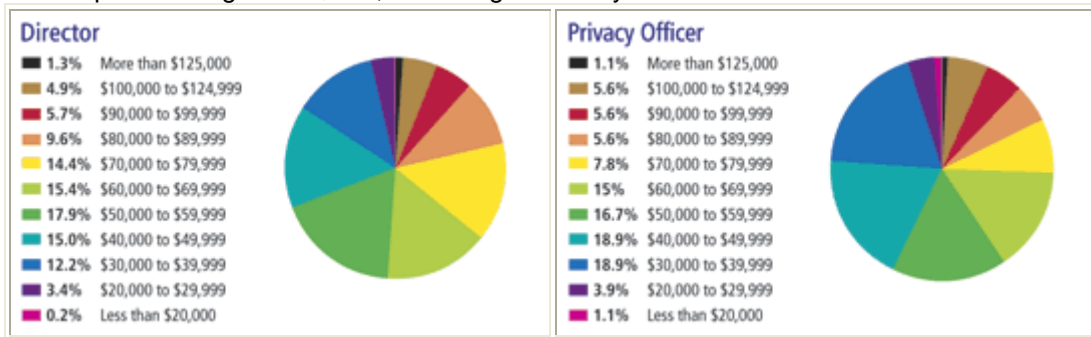
Work setting can affect salary level, as the next graph shows. For instance, more than half (51 percent) of those in the consultant/vendor setting report earning at least \$60,000 annually—more than double the percentage of respondents in the long-term care and physician office settings who report earning at that salary level. In addition, a high number of members (44 percent) who work in integrated delivery systems earn salaries in the \$60,000+ range. More members are reporting salaries in the upper categories in all settings compared to a year ago.

Job Functions Guide Salaries

Job functions clearly drive salary levels. The pie charts illustrate, in a rather dramatic way, where salaries are concentrated among AHIMA members by title. For instance, 62 percent of coding professionals and 67 percent of supervisors represented earn between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year. In contrast, managers are likely to make a bit more, with nearly half (49 percent) reporting earnings between \$40,000 and \$60,000.



Director and privacy officer titles show similar patterns, with 48 percent and 51 percent respectively, spread out rather evenly between \$40,000 and \$70,000. Consultants show a widely distributed earning pattern, with strong potential to earn in the upper salary ranges (14 percent of consultants report earning \$100,000 or more per year). Executive titles have the highest salary potential. This group represents three percent of this sample, and one third of them report earning in the \$100,000+ range annually.

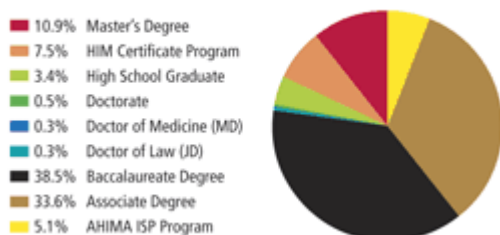


Education Proves Key to Advancement

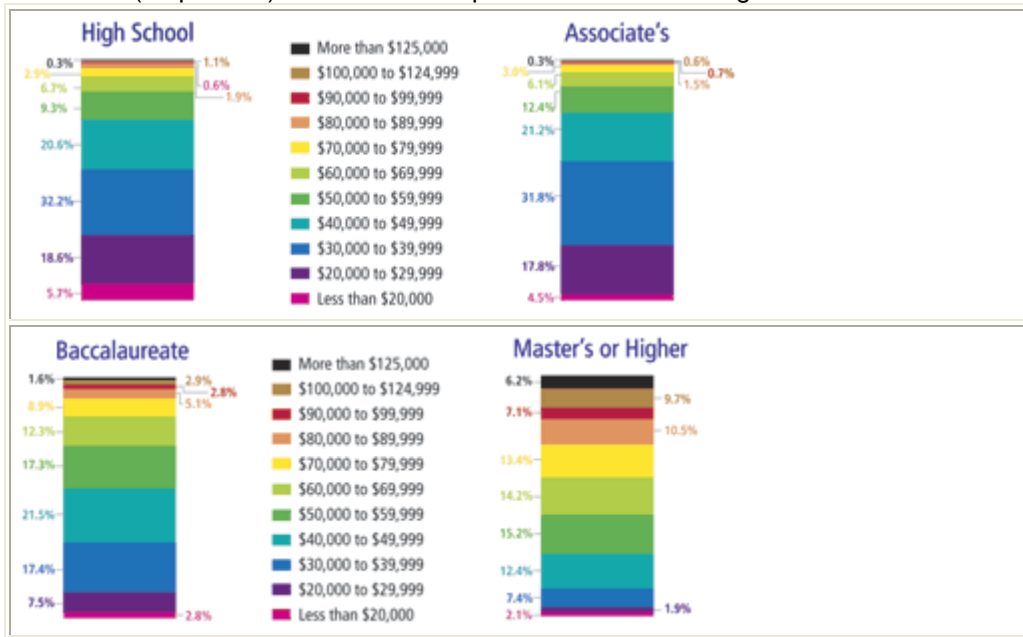
Lifelong learning is a solid approach to advancing one's career. Increased knowledge through earning a degree, a credential, or other means, can provide tangible results. The charts on these pages illustrate the level of education reached by AHIMA members and how education impacts salary levels.

Current data shows that more than half (51 percent) of members represented have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree, and that 12 percent have earned a post-baccalaureate degree. The bar charts show the impact in terms of salary. While 57 percent of those with a high school diploma and 54 percent of those with an associate degree report earning less than \$40,000 annually, this percentage drops to 28 percent for those with a baccalaureate degree and to just 11 percent for those with a master's degree or higher.

Members by Education Level



The impact is also seen at the high end of the salary spectrum. A small number (less than seven percent) of those with an associate degree or less report earning \$70,000 or more per year. That percentage triples to 21 percent for those with a baccalaureate degree and nearly seven fold (47 percent) for those with a post-baccalaureate degree.

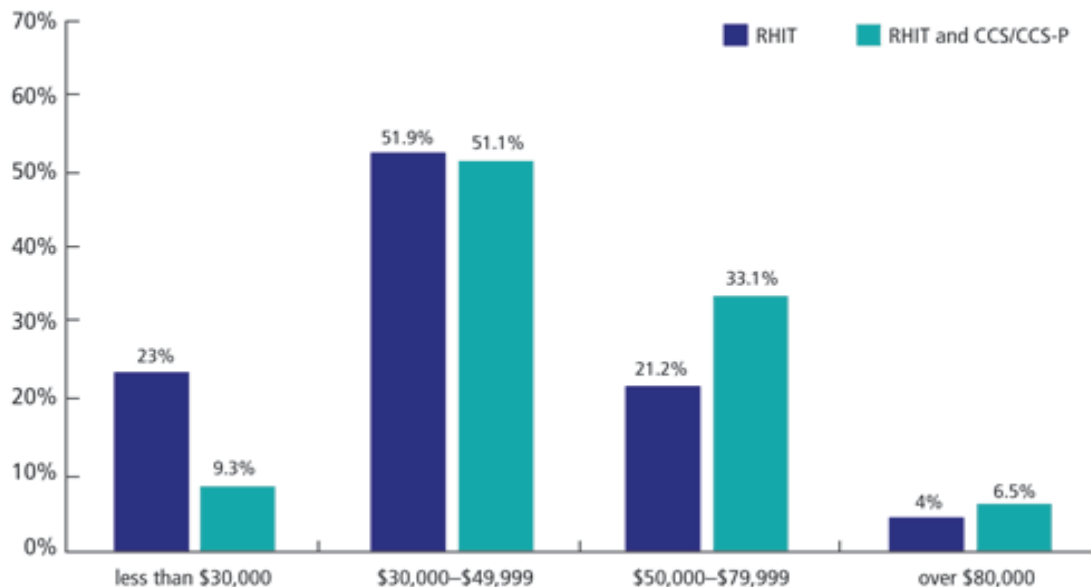


The Value of Credentials

Earning credentials is another way HIM professionals have traditionally distinguished themselves in the industry. The charts on this page illustrate how AHIMA credentials—specifically multiple AHIMA credentials—impact earning potential.

The first bar chart compares AHIMA members who have an RHIT credential to those who have earned both an RHIT and a mastery-level coding credential (CCS and/or CCS-P). For instance, 25 percent of members with only an RHIT credential report earning \$50,000 or more annually. That percentage jumps to 40 percent with those who have the additional specialty credential.

Multiple Credentials—RHIT



The second bar graph compares members with an RHIA to those who have also earned the privacy or privacy and security credential. Again, the impact is clear. While 42 percent of those with an RHIA (without the additional credential) report earning \$50,000 or less, only four percent of those with the CHP/CHPS fall in that range. At the high end, half of those with multiple credentials earn at least \$80,000, while just 18 percent without the additional credential can say the same.

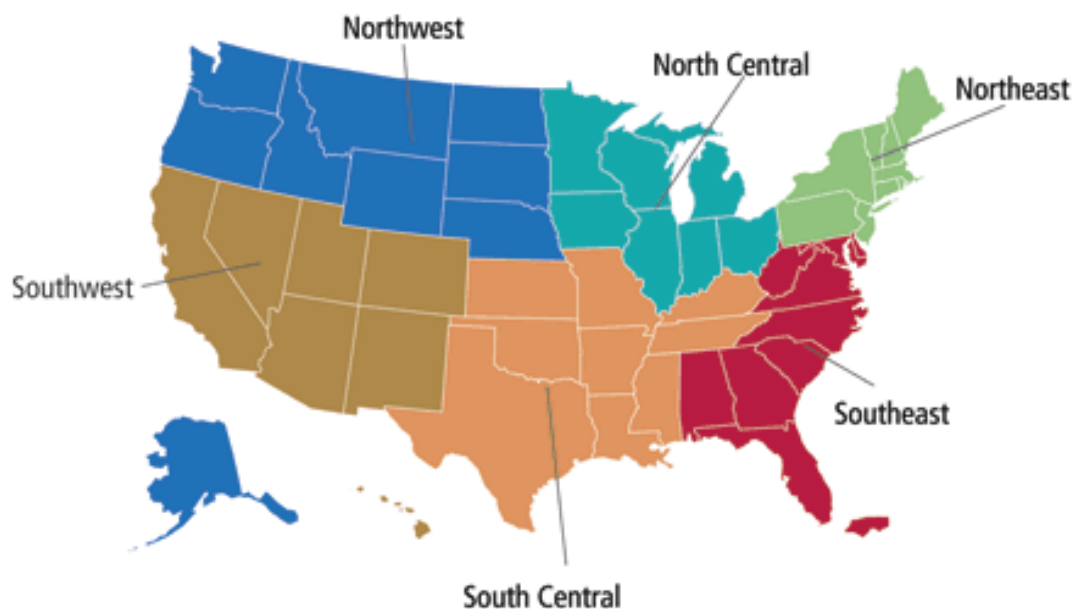
Multiple Credentials—RHIA



Regional Impact

Geography is also a contributing factor. Where HIM professionals choose to live and work can make a difference to their careers. On this page, salaries of coders and directors are compared among six regions of the country.

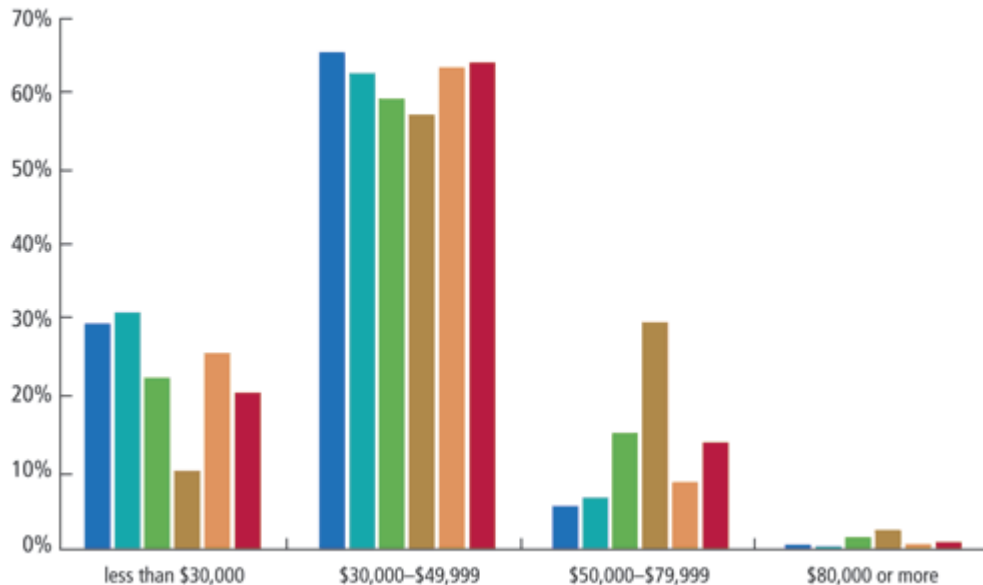
Area Legend



For coding professionals, while each region shows that the majority are earning in the \$30,000 to \$49,999 range, variances are most apparent at the ends of the salary spectrum. Only five percent of those reporting in the northwest region and seven percent in the north central region indicate earning more than \$50,000 annually. This level of earning is indicated by 32 percent in the southwest, 18 percent in the northeast, and 15 percent in the southeast.

The southwest is also paying directors the highest salaries. Forty-one percent of those represented from this region report earning \$80,000 or more per year. The northeast is next in line, with 27 percent at that level, followed by the north central and southeast at 20 percent. Fewer directors are earning that same salary level in the northwest (15 percent) and south central (14 percent) regions.

Coders by Region



The data provided here offers some food for thought as you consider how to shape your future career. Factors such as education, credentials, work settings, geography, new roles, and more can make a difference. Keep them in mind as you move ahead.

As an AHIMA member, you should also commit to completing and updating your online profile. The data shared here is all derived from that source, so a more complete data set yields the most accurate and useful report.

You can access your confidential profile by going to the “Members Only” section at www.ahima.org and clicking on “Update My Profile.” This article will also be available online to reference throughout the year under the “Member Profile Data” tab also under “Members Only.”

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BRIDGING THE GAP! EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

This resolution was written by FHIMA's Chief Delegate, Perry Ellie, MA, RHIA, FAHIMA in conjunction with FHIMA.

The intent of this resolution is to enhance dialog and actions to facilitate the employment of graduates from CAHIIM-accredited HIM programs at the baccalaureate and associate degree levels, and the AHIMA-approved coding programs at the pre-degree level.

Background information:

Employment is a goal of our students as they complete accredited and approved educational programs and begin their professional careers. Although many are successful at graduation, it seems that an ever increasing number are being challenged to achieve the entry-level experience qualifications desired by employers. This seems especially true in the coding arena. As employers are pressed to have optimal productivity from every employee from start date, new graduates find it difficult to Bridge the Gap from Education to Employment.

Thus the expanding "Catch 22" for students, "Everyone wants experience and how do I gain experience if I am unable to gain employment in my desired area" appears to be becoming more acute. If this apparent trend is allowed to continue, it will challenge our ability to recruit the next generation of students into our accredited and approved programs.

AHIMA is addressing the clinical practice education issue with the creation of the E-HIM Virtual Learning Laboratory to facilitate ongoing skill development for all. This action is applauded, but it is not a full substitute for onsite clinical experiences. Another area of action is for organizations to create "Preceptor" programs to smooth the transition from education to employment. Many facilities have these programs in place for new nursing graduates, why not HIM? It is desired that this document will generate the sharing of additional education to employment transition models that can be duplicated in other settings.

Compounding the issue is the ongoing expansion of a student base from newly created educational programs. Many of these new programs are not CAHIIM-accredited HIM offerings at the baccalaureate and associate degree levels, and are not the AHIMA-approved coding programs at the pre-degree level. We have all seen the "become a coder in 3 – 6 months" type promotions! HIM related educational offerings that do not meet AHIMA accreditation and approval standards cause confusion that challenges the integrity of our profession.

Preamble:

Whereas, HIM students are the future of our profession;

Whereas, The goal of HIM students is to gain active employment in the HIM profession upon completion;

Whereas, Initial employment appears increasingly challenging to qualify for;

Whereas, HIM employers appear to be requiring more skills and HIM experience before offering employment;

Whereas, HIM student/new graduate employment is necessary to continue to optimally recruit the next generation of HIM students;

Be it Resolved, The HIM profession must heighten it's awareness of this apparent phenomena to take corrective actions; and

Resolved, HIM accredited and approved educational programs will solicit feedback from Advisory Boards and others to determine the actual employment skills desired by employers; and

Resolved, HIM accredited and approved educational programs will, in cooperation with employers, attempt to provide optimal preparation to meet the skills expectations desired in the workforce; and

Resolved, HIM employers must enhance their efforts to provide clinical education to HIM students from HIM accredited and approved educational programs to better prepare them for the workforce; and

Resolved, HIM employers must further advance their efforts to employ recent HIM graduates from HIM accredited and approved educational programs by creating entry-level opportunities; and

Resolved, AHIMA will continue to support the development of the E-HIM Virtual Learning Laboratory to facilitate ongoing skill development for all members; and

Resolved, AHIMA BOD will continue to prioritize and be responsive to the development of new ideas and concepts addressing student education to employment transitional support; and

Resolved, AHIMA, Component State Associations (CSA's), Regional Associations and others are requested to promote the CAHIIM-accredited HIM programs at the baccalaureate and associate degree levels, and the AHIMA-approved coding programs at the pre-degree level in their respective areas via websites or other means to reduce confusion with unapproved options; and

Resolved, AHIMA, FORE, educational programs and/or members need to support formal research to statistically verify student employment at a base level and to evaluate the effectiveness of corrective actions toward improvement on an ongoing basis.

Resolved, All parties that have had experiences with "preceptor" transitional type programs are requested to share them in the CoP's. This will facilitate others evaluation of the feasibility of developing similar models that will facilitate "Bridging the gap from education to employment."

	Career Ladder for the RHIA			
	1	2	3	4
Job Titles	Medical Record coordinator	Medical Record Supervisor HIM Supervisor Transcription Supervisor	HIM Manager Operations Manager Coding Manager Transcription Manager	Director, HIM Compliance Officer Privacy Officer Administrator
Education and Certification	Bachelor's degree required or preferred Certification as RHIA, RHIT, or CCS	Rung 1, plus: Bachelor's degree RHIA Certification	Rung 2, plus 3-5 years previous management experience.	Rung 3, plus: Masters Degree (preferred); 5+ years progressive experience
Related Knowledge	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations	Rung 3 Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations
Skills	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations Customer service skills Written & verbal communication skills Computer skills Knowledge of regulatory requirements Management skills Analytical, decision making & problem solving skills Assist in budget preparation Identify cost containment strategies Manage productivity	Ability to teach others and lead process Ability to write and speak effectively Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations
Salary Ranges	\$20,000–\$50,000	\$31,200–\$50,000	\$60,000–\$85,000	\$46,000–\$150,000 and up
Where to Look	Healthcare institutions, Contract companies Medical institutions that	Healthcare institutions, Contract companies Large physician practices	Healthcare institutions contract companies Large physician practices Health management consulting firms, teaching	Healthcare institutions with research institutes Clinical research contract companies

Career Ladder for the RHIA				
	1	2	3	4
	maintain registries or databases (e.g., tumor and trauma registries) Large physician practices Health management consulting firms	Health management consulting firms	institutions	Universities, colleges Large physician Practices Health management consulting firms

	Career Ladder for the RHIT			
	1	2	3	4
Job Titles	Health Data Analyst, Insurance Claims Analyst, Data Quality Analyst	Records Technician Specialist, Clinical Coding Specialist, Compliance Specialist	Patient Information Coordinator, Medical Staff Coordinator, DRG Coordinator, APC Coordinator	Physician Practice Manager, HIS Manager
Education and Certification	Associate's degree, preferred certification as RHIT	Minimum successful completion of an AHIMA approved program. Certification as RHIA, RHIT, CCS, CCS-P, CPC or CPC-H, coding experience preferred	Associate's degree in HIM or HIT Certification as CMSC, RHIT or RHIA, coding experienced preferred,	Associate's degree required, bachelor's degree preferred, Certification as RHIA or RHIT, 3-5 years of management experience
Related Knowledge	Medical terminology, structure and content of the health record	ICD-9-CM codes, DRGs appropriateness, APCs, standards of ethical coding, statistics, federal, state and payer-specific regulations	ICD-9-CM codes, DRGs appropriateness, APCs, standards of ethical coding, statistics	Medical terminology, disease process, protocol language, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations
Skills	Medical terminology, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, customer service, oral and written communication	Medical terminology, disease process, medical record analysis, data abstraction, documentation, basic data entry, customer service, oral and written communication, computer skills, knowledge of regulatory requirements, knowledge of coding guidelines and reimbursement reporting requirements, leadership, interpersonal	Medical terminology, data abstraction, documentation, basic data entry, data collection, data analysis, data presentation, customer service, oral and written communication, computer skills, knowledge of regulatory requirements, problem-solving, training, auditing, leadership, interpersonal	Medical terminology, disease process, medical record analysis, documentation, basic data entry, database resource management, and computer operations, customer service skills, written and verbal communication skills, computer skills, knowledge of regulatory requirements, management skills, analytical, decision making & problem solving skills, budget preparation skills, Manage productivity
Job Duties	Collecting, interpreting, analyze, preparing and validating data, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of data	Oversee and monitor implementation of program, Develops educational and training programs, reviews claims, compare benchmark data, query physicians,	Maintain and generate data, Quality reviews, create and monitor reports, evaluate and audit records , reviews claims, compare benchmark data	Coordinate health information management services across the multifacility healthcare system, directs a;; the HIM functions of the facility
Salary Ranges	\$20,000 - \$30,000	\$25,000 - \$50,000, <i>and up for Coding Specialist</i>	\$28,000 - \$50,000	\$40,000 - \$60,000
Where to Look	Healthcare institutions, Medical institutions that maintain registries or databases (e.g., tumor and trauma registries) Physician practices, Health management consulting firms, Insurance companies,	Large teaching hospital, Ambulatory care settings, Healthcare institutions, Contract companies, Physician practices,	Large teaching hospitals, Healthcare institutions, Medical institutions that maintain registries or databases (e.g., tumor and trauma registries) Physician practices, Health management consulting firms	Physician offices, clinics, nursing homes, home health agency, mental health facility, public health agency

Tips For Success Following Graduation

1. **Join a community.** Visit AHIMA's Communities of Practice at www.ahima.org at least weekly. You can view loads of helpful information, seek support from a mentor, ask questions, view the Job Bank and access numerous other valuable resources. You may join a Community to learn about many areas of HIM.
2. **Be an expert.** If you know your material, you can be the person people come to with questions. Do your homework and study regulations and other guidelines frequently. When something new is introduced, you can position yourself as an expert on the topic.
3. **Know yourself.** Pay attention to the details of your life that inspire you the most. Consider volunteering for projects related to your interests, take an extra class or enroll for a seminar that may enhance your career interests.
4. **Be proud of yourself and your profession.** Your self-confidence and enthusiasm about your profession will help you gain the respect of peers and make you an individual who stands out above the rest.
5. **Exhibit an "Award Winning" attitude.** Managers are more likely to give new opportunities to individuals with an "Award Winning" attitude. Someone who is confident in his or her abilities is far more likely to succeed than someone with a negative attitude.
6. **Keep your resume up to date.** Continually keep an eye on current job openings. Send your resume for positions that include areas of responsibility that you have not previously held, but those in which you feel you have skills and qualities to perform. Always be prepared to send a current resume out when seeking new opportunities. Resumes should have accurate data including, most recent employment, education, accomplishments and contact information.
7. **Always have plans for your next move.** Take a look at where you are now and where you would like to be. For example, if you have been a HIM Clerk for many years now, you may not have all of the skills and experience necessary to move into an upper level management position. How can you get there? Take a look at the job requirements and consider in what areas you are well prepared for in the type of position you are seeking. Also consider those areas that could use improvement. Focus on making improvements to the areas in need. Take additional courses, network with others in the area who may hold a similar position to find out how they attained such a position and seek all avenues that can help you get to your goal.
8. **Be your best in job interviews.** Be prepared to answer questions related to why you want a certain position. Be sure to consider all of your strengths and weaknesses that you have before the interview. If this is the first time you are seeking a position in your field of interest, try to provide examples of reasons you would be the best candidate for the position. You may also want to focus on strengths that may relate to the job (i.e. computer experience, medical terminology, customer service skills)

9. **Don't burn bridges.** Keep positive relationships as you go from one employer to another. You never know when you may come in contact with an ex-boss or co-worker in the future. When you discuss reasons for new opportunities, make positive statements about what you have gained from your position and how it will help you in your future position.
10. **Surround yourself with successful people.** Learn from networking and interacting with other professionals within the HIM and healthcare environments. What is the basis of their success? You may have a lot to learn from them.
11. **Learn to deal well with difficult individuals.** Learning to deal with difficult individuals is an extremely valuable skill that will demonstrate your level of professionalism, intelligence and ability to solve problems.
12. **Display energy and confidence.** Success comes to those who are energetic, open to change and willing to volunteer. A confident person is beneficial to any organization. These people strive to gain the knowledge necessary to do the job and due to their "Award Winning" attitude, others will develop confidence in them. Let the people you work with know how much you care about the organization and the people you work with.
13. **Write your goals on paper.** Write down a list of your goals. You may choose both short and long-term goals. They should however, be progressive goals. The short-term goals should help you meet the long-term goals. Evaluate and update your list at least yearly. Share your goals with your peers or those who will support you.
14. **Be punctual.** Although people vary in how much they care about whether they arrive to events on time or not, no one will ever complain if you always arrive on time.
15. **Select a mentor.** A mentor can be a person in the HIM profession who has attained a position that you would like to work toward. This person could help you understand the areas in which you need to focus in order to reach a desired goal.
16. **Spend time reading.** Create time in your schedule to read a variety of publications from your profession. Take advantage of HIM magazines, journals and newsletters.
17. **Visit the web frequently.** Bookmark and keep some favorite HIM Web sites on your favorites list and visit routinely. This will keep you up to date with changing times.
18. **Create a network of colleagues and friends.** Everyone needs help from time to time. Having a network of professionals is a great way to seek advice, find answers to questions or learn from their experiences. If you meet someone at a meeting or event, get his or her business card and send him or her an email to acknowledge your meeting. This will help you build your network.
19. **Always follow up.** If you have promised to complete a project, send information or anything that requires your follow up, remember to do so promptly.
20. **Just do it.** Don't be afraid to push your limits or take chances. You don't have to be an expert to take on a new challenge. You just need to have the confidence and motivation to learn what you need to know. Some of the best

opportunities professionals take are those outside of their comfort zone. You may be tempted to let opportunities pass you by due to a lack of self-confidence. Remember, you cannot grow if you don't push your limits.

21. **Meet a recruiter, even if you are not looking for a new position.** Get to know recruiters even when you aren't looking for a new job. When you are ready to make a move, you will already have a recruiter you know and trust.
22. **Profile yourself.** Start and maintain an updated profile, a collection of information about yourself and your work experience, projects, and accomplishments. It allows for easy access to react to an unanticipated job opportunity that may arise within the organization or externally.
23. **Do informational interviews.** Read healthcare directories to discover healthcare organizations in your city or area that you didn't realize. Learn something about them.
24. **Expand your horizons.** Don't feel that you have to remain in a "traditional" HIM role. With today's advanced technology and interdisciplinary health teams, there are many opportunities where HIM knowledge is needed and welcome. Talk to people in other areas (at meetings, vendors at conference exhibit halls) to get their perspective.
25. **Know the market.** Bookmark websites that give you professional information related to various positions, salaries, geographical cost of living information etc. This provides ongoing comparative data and provides you with necessary information when considering an offer.
26. **Fill in the gaps in your knowledge.** Focus on skills you need to acquire (i.e. business, finance, IS, PI, etc.) and find out how you can fill in the gaps. Take advantage of educational seminars and conferences.
27. **Make lifelong learning a goal.** Learning anything keeps you thinking about what is possible. Add to your knowledge base. Read and review new regulations and methods. Learn about new subjects and new management styles. Read pertinent newspapers and technical journals. Visit related Web sites. Track changes in HIPPA, State Statutes and other laws. Attend seminars.
28. **Challenge yourself at a conference or meeting.** At a state or national meeting, attend sessions on something you're not familiar with. The more you learn about the world outside of your current function, the more you can be flexible to take on new assignments and move up.
29. **Obtain certifications.** Entry-level certification is critical in many positions in this profession and will assist in your quest for advancement. Advanced certification can also help you move up.
30. **Become techno-savvy.** Increase your knowledge of computers and technology. As health information becomes increasingly computerized and the Internet and e-mail change the way we work, we need to keep up. Take advantage of free or low cost instruction to software programs.
31. **Meet the key people.** When you attend a professional meeting, don't just visit with people you already know. Introduce yourself to new people. Make an effort to meet board members, presenters and other program attendees.

Reward yourself and become a VOLUNTEER

1. **Start at the grass roots.** If you are new to the profession, become a volunteer at the local or state level of your professional organization. You will make new professional contacts, meet possible mentors, and expand your knowledge base. Volunteering on a committee is an excellent way to learn new skills and manage projects or groups.
2. **Join a committee.** Volunteer on a committee or task force in your professional organization. You'll present yourself as a "can do" person in your organization, build new relationships, and learn new technical and team skills.
3. **Run for office.** If you have some experience in your local or state organization, consider running for office. This is a real opportunity to make a difference and be an advocate for the profession, improve your leadership skills, and recruit new members.
4. **Share you knowledge.** Volunteer to be a speaker at a local or state HIM education meeting or write an article for the newsletter or the *Journal of AHIMA*. Apply the creativity you use on the job and share your expertise with others.
5. **Look for related opportunities.** Consider joining a special committee of health professionals who may be linked through a common need. Your area may have a group of physicians or other professionals that need HIM related perspective. This kind of involvement can demonstrate your value and worth as a HIM professional. It can also help you evaluate ways that you can take your skills and create new opportunities for career options that build on your HIM background.



Directory of Accredited Programs

Search Accredited HIM Programs!

CAHIIM accredits baccalaureate and associate programs. You can search for programs by program level, institution name, state, or distance learning programs using the form below.

Broward Community College		
1000 Coconut Creek Parkway Coconut Creek, FL 33066 Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program		
Contact Name	Phone	Email
Charline Bumgardner , BA, RHIT	(954) 201- 2086	cbumgard@broward.edu
Central Florida Community College		
Central Florida Community College 3001 SW College Road Ocala, FL 34474 Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program		
Contact Name	Phone	Email
Suzanne B. Garrett, MSA, RHIA	(352) 854-2322 Ext. 4-1	garretts@cf.edu
Daytona Beach Community College		
P.O. Box 2811 1200 International Speedway Blvd West Daytona Beach, FL 32120 Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program		

Florida A&M University

School of Allied Health Sciences
324 Ware-Rhaney East
Tallahassee, FL 32307

Degree Awarded: Accredited Baccalaureate (HIA) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Marjorie H. McNeill, PhD, RHIA, CCS	(850) 561- 2021	marjorie.mcneill@famu.edu

Florida Community College

4501 Capper Road
North Campus
Jacksonville, FL 32218

Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Eudelia Thomas, MS, RHIA	(904) 766-6749	ethomas@fccj.edu

Florida International University

11200 SW 8th Street
HLS Room 136
Miami, FL 33199

Degree Awarded: Accredited Baccalaureate (HIA) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Sandra McDonald, MHSA, RHIA	(305) 348- 0406/8	mcdons@fiu.edu

Indian River Community College

3209 Virginia Ave
Fort Pierce, FL 34981

Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Claudia Keating, MEd, RHIA	(561) 462-4911	ckeating@ircc.edu

International College

4501 Colonial Boulevard
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Deborah Howard, MA, RHIA, CCS	(239) 482- 0019	dhoward@internationalcollege.edu

Lake Sumter Community College

9501 U.S. Highway 441
Leesburg, FL 34788
Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Brandy G. Ziesemer, MA, RHIA, CCS	(352) 365-3581	ziesemerb@lsc.edu

Miami Dade College

Medical Center Campus
950 NW 20th Street
Miami, FL 33127
Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Mary Worsley, MS, RHIA	(305) 237-4156	mworsley@mdc.edu

Pensacola Junior College

1000 College Parkway
5555 West Highway 98
Pensacola, FL 32507
Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Donna Shumway, RHIA	(850) 484-2213	dshumway@pjc.edu

Polk Community College

999 Avenue H, NE
Station #10
Winter Haven, FL 33881
Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Hertencia V. Bowe, MSA, RHIA	(863) 297-1010 Ext 5370	hbowe@polk.edu

Saint Petersburg College

P.O. Box 13489
St. Petersburg, FL 33733
Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program

Contact Name	Phone	Email
Angela Picard, MEd, RHIA	(727) 341-3623	Picard.Angela@spcollege.edu

Santa Fe Community College

3000 Northwest 83rd St.

C-101 Gainesville, FL 32606 Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program		
Contact Name	Phone	Email
Karen Bakuzonis, MSHA, RHIA	(352) 381- 3835	karen.bakuzonis@sfcc.edu
St. Johns River Community College		
Orange Park Campus 283 College Drive Orange Park, FL 32065 Degree Awarded: Accredited Associate (HIT) Program		
Contact Name	Phone	Email
Sheila Newberry, MEd, RHIT	(904) 276- 6758	sheilaneberry@sjrcc.edu
University of Central Florida		
4000 Central Florida Blvd., HPA2-210D PO Box 162200 Orlando, FL 32816-2205 Degree Awarded: Accredited Baccalaureate (HIA) Program		
Contact Name	Phone	Email
Thomas Falen, MA, RHIA, LHRM	(407) 823- 2369	tfalen@mail.ucf.edu

AHIMA Mentors Are Waiting To Hear From You

AHIMA is proud to announce there are mentors waiting to hear from you.

These experienced HIM professionals from all types of backgrounds have been recruited by AHIMA to serve as mentors. Mentoring dialogue and activities will take place using already-established avenues within the Student CoP.

How Does the Mentor Program Work?

Steps to Success:

1. Read the AHIMA Mentor Program Guidelines.

These guidelines include:

- Mission Statement
- Program Methodology
- Mentor and Student Responsibilities

2. Check out the Mentor Bios.

3. Dialogue with mentors via the Student CoP or by e-mail.

Use the Student CoP to communicate with mentors:

- CoP e-mail
- Discussion threads
- Scheduled chats (AHIMA will advise you of dates and times)

OR

If discussing a personal or sensitive matter, feel free to contact mentors at the e-mail addresses provided in their bios.

4. Check in regularly at the Student CoP.

Doing this will help you:

- Benefit from ongoing mentor-student discussions
- Add your own viewpoints and concerns
- Keep abreast of hot topics
- Be aware of new developments in Mentor Program offerings

Any questions? Send an e-mail to StudentConnections@ahima.org.
