

AHIMA's 2012 Advocacy Goals: An Agenda for the Knowns and Unknowns in the Year Ahead

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The new year will offer a multitude of knowns and unknowns. In many instances the larger issues are established but the details have yet to be revealed.

The industry will be implementing stage 2 of the meaningful use incentive program, for instance; however, providers and system vendors are waiting on the final requirements and implementation guidelines. The same holds true for the HITECH-HIPAA privacy changes and for some organizations the ICD-10-CM/PCS conversion process, which must be completed by the end of the year to enable testing in early 2013.

AHIMA has outlined its advocacy and policy goals for 2012 with a commitment to be watchful and agile in dealing with the many knowns and unknowns at play this year.

Advancing HIM's Image

AHIMA will continue to define and advance the HIM profession and its role, principles, practices, and perspectives in all of its advocacy and influence activities. This will ensure the industry, government, standards, and academic communities have a better understanding of the profession and why it must be engaged in the management of health information in all sectors of the industry.

This effort will only succeed when each member actively demonstrates his or her knowledge, experience, and understanding of where the profession is headed. HIM professionals must keep up with the rapidly changing healthcare industry so the profession leads and does not follow.

Agility and Responsiveness

The AHIMA Board of Directors has directed the advocacy and policy staff to be agile and responsive to the changing environment in every arena. Staff has identified areas that require quick action on the HIM profession's behalf. They include the following issues.

ICD-10-CM/PCS implementation and alignment with other government and industry projects, including EHR system implementations, the meaningful use program, and the nation's changing reimbursement and reporting activities.

EHRs, HIE, and the meaningful use program, including new stage 2 requirements for 2014, new certification standards, the integration of terminologies and classifications into meaningful use requirements and certification standards, a review of organization experience with stage 1 in anticipation of stage 3, and the expansion of various forms of health information exchange.

Confidentiality, privacy, and security, including the final rules on the HITECH-HIPAA changes, increased enforcement of existing HIPAA requirements, and new challenges from expanded use of EHRs, health information exchange, and the meaningful use requirements.

Clinical data and documentation integrity, which is an old HIM issue but one that is finally getting attention as the industry examines data exchange and collection and new data requirements for accountable care organizations and value-based purchasing, as well as the development and use of metadata.

Standards developers, harmonization teams, and regulators must understand the various uses of data and the need for legal health records and electronic health documents. Mapping will become a term that few can escape as the industry begins to integrate terminologies into the EHR and other systems.

Consumer involvement. As the industry expands the concept of patient-centered medicine and patient access rights to their health information, it is time for the HIM profession to engage with consumers to help them understand the different access approaches, privacy rules, and uses of their health information. In some cases HIM professionals will have to increase their patient advocacy role to help educate other health professionals on patient accessibility rights, patient portals, and other means to permit appropriate patient access.

CSA advocacy. AHIMA is enhancing its advocacy and leadership training and consultation to help component state associations (CSAs) take the lead on similar issues that are playing out at the state level. Many of the issues facing HIM professionals begin at the state level, and it is here that HIM professionals must work together to create an appropriate HIM environment.

New Research Program

The AHIMA Foundation has established a new research program called the Research Innovation and Leadership Institute that will tie into AHIMA's advocacy and influence efforts since both programs have knowledge, experience, and data to share with each other. Often AHIMA's advocacy and influence activities lead to thought leadership papers sponsored by the Foundation, while the Foundation's research provides credible information that can be used by our professional staff in influence and advocacy efforts.

Increased Education

AHIMA's advocacy and influence staff will be increasing efforts to help educate the profession on the latest technology, standards, legislation, and other AHIMA activities so that members will understand:

- Why the organization is doing the work it does
- How the work is or will be of use or benefit to the membership
- How it will affect the transformation of the profession as the industry transitions to an electronic environment

Staff will also work to ensure that AHIMA's distance education and academic programs deliver the information needed by those in the field as well as those entering the ranks of HIM.

This work will take the form of articles in the *Journal* and AHIMA's online scholarly journal *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, white papers, notices in the weekly *e-Alert* newsletter, and presentations at AHIMA meetings, CSA meetings, and webinars.

HIM Engagement

In 2012 AHIMA will continue to work with volunteers on HIM issues that crop up throughout the year. Their input will encompass best practices, HIM principles, testimony, and comments. It will reach the many groups, organizations, and individuals AHIMA works with.

Members should look for opportunities to become engaged. AHIMA will post calls for participation on short-term task forces and practice councils to address standards and proposed regulations. These announcements will appear in e-Alert and CSA Communities of Practice.

Member Is #1

In all its advocacy and influence activities AHIMA is constantly concerned with how the organization's work affects the HIM professional. This is the bottom line. With more than 63,000 members the organization is conscious that some solutions will not

be immediately positive for all members, but it seeks to balance solutions and inputs in order to assist members and their employers.

AHIMA staff need member input on the organization's efforts, whether it is serving on a practice council, task force, or workgroup, or just having a conversation with a staff member. AHIMA values and needs your perspective and your feedback.

Stay tuned to this column, AHIMA's weekly *e-Alerts*, and the Advocacy and Public Policy section of the AHIMA Web site (www.ahima.org/advocacy) for the latest on these and other HIM issues in 2012.

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