

Another Career Avenue for HIM: Coding Compliance

[Save to myBoK](#)

by Diane Lemire, MHA, RHIA, CCS

If you're armed with a background in coding and management, a position in coding compliance may be an exciting next step in your HIM career. When I applied for coding compliance manager positions, many positions had been open for a year because facilities could not find individuals with the appropriate skill set. Facilities seeking coding compliance managers usually require the following experience:

- training and education experience, particularly in coding
- inpatient and outpatient coding experience
- management experience in coding or HIM
- familiarity with creating, implementing, and analyzing processes
- familiarity with chargemasters, billing, and claims

Responsibilities and Challenges

Compliance managers function as internal auditors by verifying that departments are performing in compliance with regulations. The primary responsibilities of a coding compliance manager are to:

- seek out or investigate concerns that may be examples of fraud, abuse, or wrongdoing
- assist in creating an ethical organizational culture that helps employees feel comfortable about reporting their concerns

Other responsibilities may include:

- follow-up on fraud/abuse hotline calls and anonymous correspondence
- resolving compliance issues and problems
- performing risk assessments for the organization on regulations that affect healthcare and HIM (e.g., PEPP, the OIG work plan, and APCs)
- writing a coding compliance plan
- coordinating efforts to train physicians in compliance and other regulatory issues
- creating coding compliance seminars for the HIM staff
- assisting with organization-wide general compliance seminars
- researching Web sites and publications to stay abreast of the latest issues
- addressing financial and billing concerns that intersect with HIM, including process reviews
- acquiring comparative state and national databases
- performing coding audits and reporting recommendations and findings
- reviewing facility policies and procedures for timeliness and efficacy
- auditing PRO findings to address concerns
- reviewing hiring and continuing education of current and outsourced coders

Maintaining and Managing Compliance

To maintain compliance, financial and business services, nursing, HIM, and quality management should strive for a free flow of information. It is often said that it is better for an organization to find and resolve its problems than for the government to find them.

When a compliance incident occurs, the compliance manager is responsible for research, audits, and making recommendations. However, the responsibility for problem resolution and corrective action falls on the departments. While a compliance officer can provide focus and direction regarding regulations and findings, he or she cannot become directly involved with problem resolution. The compliance manager then reaudits to ensure that the problems have been solved.

If you have a background in coding and management and would like to take a leadership position in your facility, the coding compliance manager role may provide rewarding challenges. Between changing government regulations and coders' expanding responsibilities, a coding compliance manager can enjoy a range of educational and professional opportunities.

Diane Lemire is the coding compliance manager for the Harris County Hospital District in Houston, TX.

Article citation:

Lemire, Diane. "Another Career Avenue for HIM: Coding Compliance." *Journal of AHIMA* 72, no.6 (2001): 18.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.