

Conduct is Their Business

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by Katherine Byrd, RHIA

Suppose you were asked to do something unethical on the job. What if you were asked by your supervisor to hide delinquent charts just prior to a Joint Commission survey? What would you do?

As a profession, HIM professionals understand our moral obligation to the patient to protect patient information, to the employer to follow the rules and be loyal, to the public to be an advocate, and to the profession to set an example of integrity and honesty.

But we are facing ethical situations more frequently as our work lives become more complex and regulated.

AHIMA has long demonstrated a commitment to ethics-its first Code of Ethics was adopted in 1957 and has been revised numerous times. The association's Professional Conduct Committee adds another dimension to this commitment.

This group reviews and investigates ethics-related complaints brought against AHIMA-credentialed individuals. Its members are five credentialed, active AHIMA members-individuals working in the profession who have a real-world understanding of the situations facing us at every turn.

The review process includes a review of the AHIMA Code of Ethics and statements from all individuals involved in the alleged ethical violation. After reviewing the complaint and the responses, the Professional Conduct Committee can choose to dismiss the complaint, further investigate the complaint, place a letter of censure in the record of the individual, or schedule a formal hearing. At the hearing the evidence is reviewed and the committee has the authority to suspend the individual's AHIMA credential or to permanently revoke the individual's credential if he or she is found to be in violation of the Code of Ethics.

Why do individual members need to be aware of this? Because we as a profession have a strong belief in ethical behavior, and our AHIMA credential carries the weight of our values and principles. The Professional Conduct Committee helps ensure that we will continue to be proud of our credentials and what they stand for-and proud to be members of the profession.

Reference

Harman, Laurinda. "Confronting Ethical Dilemmas on the Job: An HIM Professional's Guide." *Journal of AHIMA* 71, no. 5 (2000): 45-50.

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