

# From Student to Privacy Officer

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by Jane Jeffries, MFA, managing editor

“I love this field and I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

—Amanda Moran, privacy officer,  
McCurtain Memorial Hospital in Idabel, OK

Being a privacy officer is a big job for anyone, but Amanda E. Moran has an additional challenge—it’s her first job after college.

As privacy officer for McCurtain Memorial Hospital in Idabel, OK, Moran has already given basic HIPAA training to all staff, reviewed the physical layout of the hospital to ensure it conforms to the privacy rule, and reviewed department policies. She has also written the required HIPAA policies and is wrapping up department-specific training.

“Everybody knows HIPAA needs to happen,” Moran says. “At first, people didn’t agree with the privacy rule and could tell that it was going to cause problems. Idabel is a small town and this isn’t a large hospital. Everybody knows everybody and is concerned with each other’s well being. HIPAA is going to change the way people have worked here for 30 years. I had to explain it wasn’t just me bringing on the rule—it was the federal government.”

Moran had her work cut out for her, but she wasn’t daunted. “I knew what I was getting into and it was exciting for me. I knew from my training I could do this job,” she says. In fact, Moran had worked at the McCurtain Memorial HIM department before college and spent her clinical working on HIPAA at a large hospital in Texarkana, TX. Still, she admits that interpreting the privacy rule is difficult, because every facility does it differently.

Fortunately, Moran is seeing her efforts come to fruition. “It’s rewarding knowing that because of my background and training and the HIPAA training I get every day through networking, I’m making a difference at the hospital and enabling it to be compliant,” Moran says.

## A Leader Online

In addition to her privacy officer responsibilities, Moran is helping other new HIM professionals by serving as the facilitator for the Recent Graduates Community of Practice (CoP). With more than 110 members, this CoP is thriving due largely to Moran’s efforts. “If I find something that I can use as a recent graduate, I post it,” she explains.

With links to articles on salary negotiations, stress management, networking strategies, and more, plus polls and active discussion threads, this CoP is full of resources for new HIM professionals. And when Moran isn’t in the Recent Graduates CoP, she’s networking through the HIPAA CoP to get answers to questions and share strategies. “I’m there several times a day,” she says.

Moran is also an active member of the Oklahoma HIMA, which, she says, is like a family: “They accept me as if I’ve been here for 10 years, for which I’m really grateful.”

## A Perfect Fit

Like many HIM professionals, Moran found this field after a brief stint in nursing school. Through a terminology class taught by an HIM department professor at East Central University in Ada, OK, she was introduced to HIM and decided to make the switch. “After my first day at my first clinical, there was no doubt that this was what I was supposed to do,” she says. Moran received her bachelor of science degree in HIM in May 2002.

Her enthusiasm for the field was shared by most of her classmates, Moran says. “We were excited about the changes happening to HIM, especially with technology and regulations. We learned a lot about management and quality assurance and utilization review. I thought, ‘I want to do all of that.’ It all requires different skills but it’s all still about healthcare.”

Though she’s new to the field, Moran has sound advice to offer both recent graduates and seasoned professionals: “Always keep learning, because the HIM field is constantly changing and improving.”

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