

# Get Ready for the HIPAA Olympics

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*by Jeanne Cannon, RHIA, CPhT*

HIPAA compliance might be one of the biggest challenges of the decade for covered entities—and not only because of all the new requirements. Simply reading and interpreting the regulations has proven to be a monumental task. So how can a HIPAA team leader make staff enthusiastic about learning the regulations?

When I was assigned to be the HIPAA team leader for a health insurance company, I knew that if I was bored and frustrated with the regulations, our staff would be too. This article reveals how our team came up with an entertaining, educational way to get through HIPAA training.

## On Your Mark, Get Set

Our staff decided we could facilitate an effective learning method if we could find a competitive way to educate staff members about HIPAA. During the creative process, the Winter Olympics were under way. One of the team members mentioned that a HIPAA Olympics might be fun. We joked about the idea at first, but we realized that a HIPAA Olympics might be exactly the type of competitive, fun, and interactive type of education we needed.

Once the staff members agreed, we began to plan. First, we had to develop the Olympic events. The HIPAA team researched articles specific to our industry and HIPAA and found one we felt was the most user-friendly for our staff. We distributed the article to all staff members, requesting that they read it thoroughly. The HIPAA team used that same article to develop 11 quizzes, or “events,” made up of seven to 10 questions each.

Next, we divided the staff into Olympic teams. Three members of the HIPAA team served as judges. We divided the remaining 25 staff members into teams of five members each, and each team chose a sport, a team captain, a game piece, and a team name.

The HIPAA team developed a game board to display team results, and we hung it in a common hallway so the staff could see each team’s progress. We enlisted team captains to generate support and encouragement for the teams.

## Let the Games Begin

For our Olympics kickoff, we held an opening ceremony in the lobby of our office. We played theme music and had our CEO carry the Olympic torch made by one of our team members. Our CEO emphasized the importance of HIPAA compliance and encouraged full participation in the Olympic events by all staff. We distributed copies of the rules to all staff via e-mail.

We distributed an event every Monday morning via e-mail. Entries were due back to the judges by noon on Friday. For tracking purposes, entries had to be submitted via e-mail or fax (for out-of-town staff), so that name, date, and time were recorded on the entry document. Each participant was scored individually, then the average of the team members’ scores was used as the weekly overall team score. To encourage participation, the whole team was disqualified for the week if even one team member missed the noon deadline.

Each individual’s event score was communicated only to that individual, but the overall team score was reported to all staff by late Friday afternoon. Individuals who scored 100 percent on the event were entered into a drawing for a gift certificate to a business of the winner’s choice.

## Closing Ceremonies

We held a closing ceremony in which we honored first-, second-, and third-place winners with gold, silver, and bronze medals on red, white, and blue ribbons. In addition to the ribbons, gold medal winners received four hours off with pay, silver medal

winners won two hours off with pay, and bronze medal winners won a gift certificate. Again, we played theme music, decorated the meeting room with a patriotic theme, and hosted an appreciation lunch for all staff.

The goal of providing a fun, innovative method of introductory education about HIPAA was achieved by the HIPAA Olympics. Most staff enjoyed the competitive spirit of the project and gained an appreciation of how HIPAA compliance will affect both the company and our jobs.

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