IG Case Study: Rady Children's Hospital–San Diego. Prioritizing Information Governance Initiatives Already Underway

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Editor's Note: This article is the fifth installment in an ongoing series highlighting information governance case studies.

Information governance (IG) can be overwhelming, especially as an organization looks to implement a program that addresses all types of information across the enterprise. In most cases, IG is layered on top of daily work and other organizational initiatives, and is one more thing to do. So, where do you start? How do you decide how to go about this thing called IG?

For some organizations the best approach is to start by taking a look at IG-related initiatives that are already in progress. That could be initiatives in the health information management (HIM) department or in other areas of the organization.

Rady Children's Hospital–San Diego (RCHSD) faced the challenge of prioritizing IG programs. By assessing current projects that were already in the works, RCHSD was able to start their program with momentum. The following is a case study on just how RCHSD accomplished this task—shared with the intention that other healthcare organizations could model their own IG efforts off RCHSD.

RCHSD Organizational Description

Mission: To restore, sustain, and enhance the health and developmental potential of children through excellence in care, education, research, and advocacy.

Background: Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego is:

- The largest children's hospital in the state of California based on admissions.
- The sixth largest children's hospital in the country.
- A provider of care to 91 percent of the specialty pediatric population in the area.
- The region's only designated pediatric trauma center.
- Affiliated academically with University of California, San Diego School of Medicine.

Information Governance Program Description

RCHSD had a data governance committee and a chief data officer demonstrating overall organizational commitment to data and information governance. Existing committees and workgroups were working on information lifecycle management and information governance strategies.

Prior State Analysis

Leveraging AHIMA's IG *PulseRate*™ application, RCHSD scored a two out of five, which, according to the assessment tool, indicated RCHSD was in the early stages of an information governance program. This rating suggests that there were many opportunities for RCHSD to advance IG initiatives and strategies.

Information Governance Drivers

With a desire to move forward in data and information governance, the HIM director worked with the AHIMA team and selected areas where work was already being done within existing RCHSD workgroups as a way to demonstrate the value and organizational commitment to information governance. Those areas included:

1. **Legal and regulatory: Patient information request**

   To achieve a level 5 of IG maturity on the Information Governance Adoption Model (IGAM)TM, the organization must ensure availability of the right information in a timely manner to support patient information requests, even in the most unfavorable conditions.

2. **Enterprise information management: Up-to-date and managed information inventory** To achieve a level 5 on the IGAM scale, the organization must routinely employ data discovery technology to maintain a current and accurate inventory of electronic protected health information (ePHI) and other classes of electronic information that have been defined.

Through RCHSD's participation in AHIMA's IG Pilot Program, they realized immediate benefits by focusing on IG competencies for selected initiatives already in practice. The lessons from these efforts moved RCHSD and the HIM team forward in achieving improved and standardized processes across patient information requests and an up-to-date information inventory.

Legal and Regulatory: Patient Information Request Examined

RCHSD created a master service agreement (MSA) with one preferred offsite record storage vendor. By creating a MSA and moving all records to one vendor, RCHSD was able to move forward in two organizational IG competencies: Privacy and Security, and Legal and Regulatory.

The efficiencies gained from ensuring consistency by investing in storage management through one vendor is an example of a return on investment seen by RCHSD through this project. All aspects of record storage management are more consistent from intake, retrieval, and ultimate disposition of records. Moving to one vendor improved the organization's ability to retrieve records when needed, decreased turnaround times, and thus increased customer satisfaction.

Negotiating the MSA and moving all records to one offsite vendor also resulted in significant annual financial savings. This initiative was further expanded to records housed in off-site ambulatory care areas. Those records were also moved centrally to the preferred vendor. Doing this allowed the ambulatory care departments to utilize previously used storage space for patient care areas.

Follow-up steps included reviewing record retention policies and evaluating opportunities for record destruction, leveraging the record retention workgroup to accomplish this work.

Enterprise Information Management: Up-to-Date and Managed Information Inventory Examined

RCHSD created a centralized application, server, and database inventory as part of this project. Having one central repository for all information had provided many benefits. These include:

- A single source of truth for data and information.
- Better integration with organizational change management process.
- All applications mapped with business owners, allowing for technology to be integrated with the people.
- Active directory cleanup and identification of which systems were integrated and which were not. This allowed the organization to determine if integration was possible when not already in place.

A documented information inventory allowed the organization to move to a higher level of maturity in IGAM's Enterprise Information Management competency.

Information Governance Adoption Model

Case Study Summary

Healthcare organization leaders and staff are often challenged with balancing requirements of daily operations with organizational strategies. Adding IG to an already busy schedule may be a difficult sell. Rather than trying to "boil the ocean" and get everything done, the HIM director at this organization chose to focus on two key deliverables where she knew success could be achieved. Demonstrating the return on investment for both projects quantified the necessity and potential financial benefit of an ongoing, formalized IG strategy.

Healthcare organizations are being tasked to do more with less. The time may not seem right to implement yet another initiative. However, it is possible to implement information governance, using existing resources, by evaluating current initiatives and projects and prioritizing those under the oversight of an information governance program. The benefits of an IG program, including financial benefits and more intangible benefits such as improved productivity, will ultimately make the organization more efficient. Once an IG program has taken off, it will become part of the organization's culture.

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