

# It's No Secret: Privacy Training is Here

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by Jane Jeffries

Thanks to HIPAA, HIM professionals have an exciting career opportunity before them. The final privacy rule requires that covered providers, health plans, and healthcare clearinghouses designate a privacy officer to oversee the development and implementation of privacy policies and procedures. For HIM professionals, this is a promotion waiting to happen.

## A Natural Fit

"For HIM professionals, confidentiality is in their blood. That's their main goal," says Holly Ballam, RHIA, privacy officer and physician liaison at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. "[The position] is a natural fit."

Ballam's background in both medical records and information security fueled her leap to the privacy officer position. Even before the HIPAA mandate, "the director of medical records knew that the privacy officer position was important and worked it into her budget," says Ballam.

According to Ballam, the keys to the job are within reach for all HIM professionals. "[Aspiring privacy officers] need to read the *Federal Register* to learn what HIPAA is all about and what it requires. They need to educate themselves."

To that end, AHIMA has added four privacy training courses to its online Continuing Education program. Authored by privacy experts, these courses are designed to prepare HIM professionals for all aspects of the privacy officer job—from the legal roots of privacy to educating coworkers.

The first course, "Building the Foundation for the Privacy Initiative," covers the history of privacy in the US. "Privacy Practices and Operations," the second course, explores privacy policies and procedures including consents, the "minimum necessary" standard, and ROI. "The Responsibilities and Role of the Privacy Officer Position" addresses staff training, business agreements, patient relations, and IRBs. Finally, the fourth course, "Privacy Compliance Process," focuses on privacy complaints, investigations, and public relations.

The courses are asynchronous, meaning that students can complete and access them at their own pace at any time within a year. The courses include all reading material, graphics, exercises, and links to resources and related Web sites and are frequently updated. Further, students can use an electronic bulletin board to post questions. Each course costs \$200 for members (\$700 for all four) and is worth four CE credits.

Although Ballam acknowledges the many resources available for privacy officers, she argues that "staying up to date is the challenge. You can read everything but there are so many interpretations. You have to figure out what's right for your facility."

## Talk Yourself Up

Do you want "privacy officer" to be your next title? According to Ballam, make opportunities to showcase your skills. "Talk to the CIO, CEO, or COO. In smaller facilities that may not have the budget for a privacy officer, volunteer to educate yourself and others," Ballam says. "Once people see what you are capable of doing and what needs to be done, they'll give you that title."

And just think: you'll have HIPAA to thank for your promotion.

For more information about AHIMA's privacy training continuing education courses, go to [www.ahimacampus.org/](http://www.ahimacampus.org/).

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