

# March Madness: AHIMA Gears Up for Team Talks

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by Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA

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Each year in March the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sponsors an elaborate tournament designed to identify the national basketball champions. Sixty-four teams begin the competition and after the first weekend of play, the “sweet sixteen” winners emerge. Then there is the elimination to the “final four” and finally, the championship team. It has been named “March Madness” by the media because of the fierceness of the competition, the finality of losing a game, and the sheer volume of basketball games crammed into a single month.

Here at AHIMA we have our own form of March Madness called Team Talks. These are the AHIMA version of town meetings or family conferences. These regional chats began in 1994 as an additional way to build a team-like relationship among AHIMA members, elected representatives, and staff. A Team Talk is scheduled for each week in March in a different part of the country.

## Bringing the Conference to the Region

Teams in the NCAA tournament represent different geographic conferences and win the right to play in the championship games. However, some teams that do not represent a conference make it to the finals. Instead of bringing regional representatives to a conference, AHIMA takes the conference to each region.

These meetings provide a forum for members to discuss emerging issues and concerns with national and state leaders as well as AHIMA staff. Members of the Board of Directors are present for each Talk along with key staff members, state leaders, and volunteers serving on various committees and task forces. Attendance is not limited to elected representatives. Team Talks are open to any AHIMA member and there is no registration fee. Our hope is that every state will have attendees present at one of the Team Talks. This way, we can identify issues by region and recognize those that generate national concern. We hope that attendees will return to their states and share what they learned with other members.

## No Elimination, Only Participation

At the NCAA tournament, teams let their playing do the talking and the best prevails. In AHIMA Team Talks, no one is eliminated and all ideas, thoughts, and issues are received. This is our face-to-face opportunity to foster relationships, form partnerships, and set the strategic direction for AHIMA. Attendees receive up-to-date information on progress toward our strategic initiatives and major projects. Team Talks are also opportunities to generate new ideas and strategies, both short and long term. In addition to all this talking, a lot of listening goes on during Team Talks, and the AHIMA agenda is set.

## Everybody Wins

To attend the NCAA tournament, a team must have defeated the other teams in its conference. Occasionally, a “Cinderella” team emerges and surprises all the forecasters with unexpected success. At Team Talks, we welcome each of you to a world of possibilities where any idea can become an expedition or a strategic initiative. State leaders have been asked to submit agenda items for Team Talks through the Communities of Practice. We need everyone’s help to continue to move AHIMA forward as the nation’s leader in HIM. Team Talks give you another opportunity to participate.

I’m looking forward to meeting you at Team Talks. Maybe you’ll be the Cinderella with a golden idea.

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**TEAM TALKS 2002**

March 7	Portland, OR	March 16	
March 9	Las Vegas, NV	March 23	Baltimore, MD
March 14	Atlanta, GA		St. Louis, MO

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