

# Privacy -- an AHIMA Organizational Value

Save to myBoK

*by Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE, executive vice president/CEO*

Ten years ago, AHIMA drafted model federal legislation to protect confidential medical record information. We aimed to raise Congress' awareness that protection for this most personal information was sorely lacking and that the absence of uniform legal protection was a barrier to the use of information technology. Now implementation of the privacy rule under HIPAA is just two months away.

It has been a long and rocky road to get this far and the regulations under HIPAA represent many compromises from our original legislative vision. Still, April 14 represents an important beginning.

In a November 25 letter to the secretary of Health and Human Services, the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) reported on hearings on compliance readiness. While there is widespread support for the goals of HIPAA and the privacy rule, there is "an extremely high level of confusion, misunderstanding, frustration, anxiety, fear, and anger as the April 14, 2003, compliance date nears," the committee said.<sup>1</sup>

## AHIMA Leads in Privacy Resources

Despite these fears, witnesses acknowledged that some professional associations have "succeeded in advancing implementation for their members." AHIMA tops this list with a complete program of guidance, education, specialty advancement, and networking. In an unpublished AHIMA survey of 6,600 members and 3,600 nonmembers, 99 percent of members and 97 percent of nonmembers said they looked to AHIMA first as a source of information on HIPAA and privacy. Here's a sampling of AHIMA's privacy resources:

- **In print:** AHIMA has published hundreds of articles, practice briefs, and other advisories, which are available in the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, AHIMA published the first privacy officer position description and in this issue, we debut a privacy officer career ladder.
- **In person:** AHIMA conducted 21 "Getting Practical with Privacy" seminars in 2002 and will offer 19 new "Getting Practical with Privacy and Security" seminars across the country in 2003. The resource book from the 2002 seminar is now available and a new textbook on privacy will be published this summer.
- **Online:** AHIMA offers privacy e-learning from basic to specialty advancement. An integrative institute on privacy premiered at the 2002 national convention and will be repeated several times this year.
- **In the CoP:** Every day hundreds of AHIMA members exchange ideas and tools, access resources and, together, advance practice on the HIPAA and Privacy Officer Communities of Practice.

## The New Era Begins

This issue highlights the final countdown to April 14 by addressing special implementation challenges, including new patient rights, audit trails, and work force training. This issue also includes the second installment in our transcription feature series, "By Line, by Hour: Keeping the Transcription Machine Running."

One of AHIMA's organizational values is to advance the "the public's right to private and high-quality health information" and we will continue to provide privacy guidance and tools and advocate for needed regulation changes. The Association will also advance our positions with Congress and HHS.

## References

1. National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics. Letter to Secretary Thompson Regarding Implementation of the Privacy and Confidentiality Regulations, November 25, 2002. Available at [www.ncvhs.hhs.gov/021125lt.htm](http://www.ncvhs.hhs.gov/021125lt.htm).

2. See AHIMA's Web site at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org) for more information on products, services, and advocacy positions.

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