

Take a "Deep Dive" into Information Stewardship

[Save to myBoK](#)

By Angela C. Kennedy, EdD, MBA, RHIA

Health Informatics and information management professionals have traditionally been focused on areas such as risk management, quality assurance, licensure, accreditation, privacy, and security requirements for their organizations. But compliance—conformance or obedience to procedures, rules, and regulations—is an important area for HIM professionals to keep on their radar as well. Today's healthcare landscape is a veritable alphabet soup, from HIPAA and HITECH to ONC, CMS, FDA, and other regulations and regulatory agencies.

Recovery audits, "meaningful use" EHR Incentive Program attestation, and HIPAA are top priorities for most organizations as they work to mitigate loss and risks. Our healthcare ecosystem is evolving and our organizations are rapidly transforming to meet the needs of the healthcare consumer. Technology has moved faster than the advancement of our governance framework to support information as an asset. HIM professionals are in a strong position to advocate for continued evolution in their organizations to keep up with this evolving ecosystem.

It is important to recognize the impact of non-compliance on the facility and the practitioner. We all have the obligation to know and understand healthcare laws and regulations. Ignorance is not bliss—and it is certainly not a defense. Education and communication across the organization and across multiple initiatives is of paramount importance. Failure to educate, in some cases, is actionable under law and is known to contribute to poor quality of care for the consumer. Data stewardship is not successful when practiced in a vacuum.

Compliance impacts every operational aspect of our organizations and health informatics and information management professionals are working diligently to avoid the risk of revenue loss, civil penalties, criminal convictions, and government sanctions. Organizations are gearing up preparations as the Office for Civil Rights moves ahead with phase II of HIPAA audits.

Stark Laws, also known as the Medicare and Medicaid Protections Act, require careful audit of physician contracts. Meaningful use continues to evolve and internal monitoring and policies and procedures for compliance continue to be recognized as priorities for organizations.

A strong commitment to information governance as a framework to support compliance initiatives will reinforce information as an asset. But we cannot continue to view information governance only as a framework to support regulatory initiatives. A comprehensive information governance plan that aligns with organizational strategy, values information as an asset, and treads though every initiative, every aspect of work, and every individual in the organization will lead to better organizational performance, organizational compliance, better revenues, and, most importantly, successful consumer outcomes.

Over the past two years I have encouraged you to dream big, believe, and lead. My final message will end no differently. I encourage you to take a "deep dive" into information stewardship. Engage your organization in ongoing information governance assessment and evaluation. Technology will continue to advance information as a critical asset for our organizations. LEAD your organization to success and longevity.

Angela Kennedy (angela.kennedy@ahima.org) is head and professor, department of health informatics and information management, at Louisiana Tech University.

Article citation:

Kennedy, Angela. "Take a "Deep Dive" into Information Stewardship" *Journal of AHIMA* 85, no.11 (November 2014): 10.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.