

We are AHIMA; We are Family

Save to myBoK

by Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA

I think we can all agree on the importance of family and its influence on the person each of us becomes. However, there are many types of families. Sometimes we have friends that are like family. Our recent national tragedy brought America closer together as an extended family. In the 73 years we have been organized, the members of AHIMA have certainly grown into a family as well.

One of the values I want to promote during my presidency is unity within our diverse family. We are HIM directors in hospitals and psychiatric and long-term care facilities. We are coders, technology experts, and privacy officials. We can be found in ambulatory care facilities, prisons, student health centers, and corporate America. We include a professional staff, an elected Board of Directors, an extensive volunteer structure, and each one of you. It takes each one of us working together to make AHIMA a viable and productive family community.

Dolores Curran, a family science expert and author of *Traits of a Healthy Family*, tallied the responses of more than 500 professionals who work with families to compile a list of 15 qualities shared by “healthy” families. I want to highlight a few as we explore the idea of AHIMA as family.

Communicating and Listening

AHIMA is providing avenues to foster communication. Team Talks take Board members around the country to discuss issues and strategies with the members, and component state associations provide additional opportunities to communicate. We have print vehicles, such as the *Journal* and *Advantage*, to share information. AHIMA’s E-alert keeps members apprised of current happenings affecting HIM. The Association offers educational tools such as audio seminars, the online learning campus, the Coding Assessment and Training Solutions Program, and a new privacy workshop. And of course there is the AHIMA Web site, a continuously updated source of important information.

The next step in our communication as a family is Communities of Practice, launched to allow communication online with any of our 40,000 members. There are chat rooms and libraries, opinion polls, and frequently asked questions with answers. And there are unlimited opportunities to network with other members.

For the family to be healthy, we must use the communication devices available to us and be willing to share information as well as listen to the wisdom of others. We each need to keep our member profile up to date—and we can do that in just seconds online. We need to go into Communities of Practice and explore the resources available and the already established Communities that might interest or benefit us. Or we can start a Community to gather and share more information about a particular subject.

A Sense of Shared Responsibility

There is a lack of credentialed HIM professionals to meet market demands. Each of us can be an ambassador for our profession. The Board has identified work force as a 2002 strategic issue. You can help by talking about the HIM profession at schools and community meetings. Talk about it at church and in civic functions. Help to build awareness locally about the important function we provide within the healthcare delivery system.

Another 2002 strategic issue is the decreasing enrollment numbers in our HIM educational programs. If all 40,000 members shared the responsibilities of acting as recruiters, we would turn around the low enrollment numbers. If each one of us promoted our skills and the benefits of having credentialed professionals on the job, we would not have a concern about the value of our credentials.

Valuing Service to Others

Through our volunteers, AHIMA is a family that serves its members. We need you at the local, regional, state, and national levels to accomplish the mission of the Association. We need authors, we need committees that work, we need ears that listen to monitor industry trends, and we need to share best practices.

I am convinced that we are family. To be healthy, we need to communicate, share, be responsible, volunteer, and help when needed.

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