



AHIMA *Vision 2016 White Paper: A Blueprint for Quality Education in HIM*

An AHDi task force was convened to evaluate and comment on AHIMA's *Vision 2016 White Paper: A Blueprint for Quality Education in HIM*. The objective was to determine the relevance of this document as it pertains to current and future medical transcription training. The US Department of Labor is predicting the medical transcription profession will grow faster than average through 2016. Solid education and training programs are vital if we are to meet the increasing demand for knowledge workers in this field.

KEY PRIORITIES OF THE AHIMA BLUEPRINT

- A. Transformation of health information management to a graduate level profession by 2016.
- B. Realign the health information management associate degree with workforce needs by 2016.
- C. Prepare an effective, qualified pool of health information management faculty by 2016.

AHDI RESPONSE

Medical transcription training programs are primarily certificate programs averaging 9 to 18 months in length. Past efforts on behalf of AHDi (then AAMT) to promote 2-year, associate degree programs were met with limited success. While the current workforce shortage is predicted to compound over the next eight years, recruiting capable candidates into the profession has been challenging, due in part to the commoditization of transcription and the subsequent decrease in pay, but also because of the widespread perception that medical transcription is a dying profession that will be easily replaced by technology. With shrinking enrollments, some community colleges are having to shut down their medical transcription programs. Even where programs remain strong, there continues to be concern for whether the industry can support degreed professionals with wages that are commensurate with the education required for entry to practice and sustainable employment. Employers are also struggling with the effects of commoditization. Decreasing margins make it difficult to provide on-the-job training and remediation, resulting in the need for better skilled and trained workers coming straight out of school.

To move the profession forward, it is imperative that educators, practitioners, and employers come together to address the severe lack of qualified workers for today, while also preparing knowledge workers for the demands of tomorrow. Traditional medical transcription training will no longer produce a graduate capable of long-term employment in this field. Factors contributing to this change are increasing concerns around privacy and security of medical documentation and the critical need to (a) consolidate redundant roles and processes, (b) reduce errors and sentinel events in patient care delivery, and (c) drive down the burgeoning cost of care for all consumers. All of these factors are driving the demand for a more comprehensive documentation specialist prepared to handle the greater complexity of documentation in today's healthcare system.

The practice of healthcare documentation is changing rapidly; therefore, the training of it's practitioners must evolve to meet those changes. Advances in technology require a professional who is

comfortable with the more technical aspects of documentation in an electronic environment, and the *AHDI Model Curriculum* was recently revised to realign educational outcomes with workforce needs. The five distinct content areas of the *Model Curriculum* continue to be English Language, Medical Knowledge, Technology, Medicolegal Aspects of the Healthcare Record, and Medical Transcription Practice; however, additional competencies are being added under each content area to further define the skill set required of a more work-ready graduate. Students will be expected to have more applicable knowledge regarding electronic health records, speech recognition technology, and other emerging technologies that impact healthcare documentation (data tagging, database warehousing, natural language processing, etc.), as well as superior critical thinking skills that will enable them to serve reliably as risk managers.

The bar must be raised on entry-level education. Incorporating the additional skill sets into a curriculum with a broad foundation will naturally elevate the current medical transcription certificate program to an associate degree level. In addition, AHDI knows there is a role for a higher-level, degreed position for healthcare documentation specialists interested in furthering their education and experience. Medical transcriptionists possess a unique set of skills that when mastered and paired with additional training in technology, management, and data analysis could create a knowledge worker that would allow greater collaboration with the software engineers developing EHR systems and tools for evidence-based medicine to meet the needs of all allied health professionals. Traditional transcription of the entire healthcare report from start to finish is quickly evolving to a report that is instead created from multiple forms of data capture, merging elements within the same document, thus requiring the documentation specialist to verify the integrity of each capture in order to ensure accuracy of data, confirmation of patient identification, and completeness of the final document. Using healthcare documentation as a foundation and then constructing clear pathways into which documentation experts can move will provide a career lattice that will attract the next generation and make more efficient use of the current workforce.

In concert with AHIMA's Blueprint, AHDI puts forth the following key priorities.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION EDUCATION

- A. Elevate the medical transcription certificate program to an associate degree by 2016.
- B. Inform and retool under-educated medical transcriptionists to meet the needs of the changing workplace.
- C. Develop an advanced level degree program for healthcare documentation experts encompassing a more technical role by 2016.
- D. Prepare a capable team of educators to facilitate this transition by 2016.
- E. Develop a series of relevant apprenticeship programs to better bridge the gap between education and employment.
- F. Work with allied health partners to create a meaningful career lattice in healthcare that will attract the next generation workforce and make the best use of our currently scarce resources.

White Paper Task Force Members:

Renee Becker, CMT

Christy Cole, RHIA

Rashell Coleman

Susan Dooley, CMT, AHDI-F

Ava George

Carolyn Grimes, MS, RHIA, CMT, AHDI-F

Wendyanne Jex

Pat Stettler, CMT, AHDI-F

Janet Stiles, BSN, RN, CMA-AC

Kim Watts, CMT, AHDI-F

Debbie Wolfe, CMT, AHDI-F

Lisa Woodley, RHIT, CMT, AHDI-F

AHDI Staff:

Kim Buchanan, CMT, AHDI-F

Diana Gish, CMT, AHDI-F

Lea Sims, CMT, AHDI-F