CUNY CareerPATH
Preparation for Adults Through Training and Higher Education

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LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SERVICE

About Health Information Careers

It is hard to overstate the impact of electronic health records (EHR) and related systems on the delivery and organization of health care. These information systems are changing the way everyone in health care performs their jobs – clinicians and administrators, people who work directly for health care organizations such as hospitals, doctors' office and community clinics, and those who work for insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, government agencies and non-profit organizations.

There are many people who help to organize and maintain health information data for the growing health care industry. These people ensure the quality, accuracy, accessibility and security of health information. Increasingly, health information is collected and managed using EHR and other connected electronic systems. Since 2009, the federal government has encouraged the use of EHR systems, which are expected to improve the quality of care and eventually help reduce health care costs. The main incentive program for adopting EHR systems is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The buzzword associated with these incentives is "meaningful use" (see text box on next page).

Health information is one of the few health-related fields in which there is no direct patient care. Driven by the increased use of EHR systems, the health information field is expected to grow and evolve in the next several years, as EHR systems change the way everyone involved in health care does their work.

A career in health information tends to appeal to people who:

- Would like to work in health care, but not hands-on with patients
- Are detail-oriented
- Have good analytical skills
- Enjoy computers, science, management, and law
- Like working with doctors, nurses, lawyers, administrators and executives

Careers in health information are of several different types[1]. They are described below in order of the typical education requirements.

- Entry-level administrative jobs related to health information management
- Health information management (HIM)
- Health information technology (Health IT)
- Health informatics (HI)

Entry-level administrative jobs related to health information management. There are a number of jobs that have the potential to lead into health information management jobs. These entry-level administrative jobs typically do not require a specialized credential although it is helpful to have some knowledge of the health care environment. These are occupations such as medical receptionist, medical billing clerk, medical records clerk, unit clerk, patient registrar, and accounts

[1] Other than entry-level administrative jobs, this is the categorization used by AHIMA – the American Health Information Management Association, www.ahima.org

receivable representative. People in some of these jobs have a background in bookkeeping or accounting. Others may have taken courses in medical billing and coding. Some may only have backgrounds in computer applications or basic administrative skills. Most of the training for these jobs is through non-credit programs and skills are learned on the job.

Health Information Management (HIM). HIM jobs are considered "allied health" jobs. People in HIM relate both to clinicians such as nurses and doctors and to Health IT workers. The core jobs in HIM are certified medical coder, health record analyst, records technician and health information manager. Other HIM jobs include clinical documentation specialist, quality analyst and clinical data analyst. The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) is the professional organization representing this workforce. AHIMA accredits academic programs and professional development opportunities, and offers credentialing exams related to many HIM jobs. HIM jobs often require an Associate or Bachelor's degree. The major exception to the degree requirement is medical coding, which typically requires a credential but not necessarily a degree. Coding jobs may be listed or advertised as medical records coder, outpatient coder, emergency department coder, or inpatient coder. Almost every job listing for a coder requires one of the following credentials: Certified Coding Associate (CCA), Certified Coding Specialist (CCS), Certified Professional Coder (CPC), Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) or Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT).

HIM jobs are with all types of health care providers as well as insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, health information exchanges and government-funded organizations. In general, people at different levels of education and experience will qualify for different types of HIM jobs.

What does "meaningful use" mean?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provides a financial incentive to physician and hospital providers who demonstrate the meaningful use of certified electronic health records. This "money on the table" has served as a big incentive to hospitals and others to adopt electronic health records (EHR) systems, as EHR systems are expensive and require significant up-front investment.

Demonstrating meaningful use means that professionals and hospitals must meet certain objectives set out by CMS. The objectives and standards are slightly different for professionals and for hospitals, but both are designed to improve the quality of patient care. The meaningful use objectives and standards are being implemented in three stages over a number of years, with each stage having additional requirements and tougher thresholds:

- Stage 1: Data capture and sharing: 2011-2012
- Stage 2: Advanced clinical processes: 2014
- Stage 3: Improved outcomes: 2016

Each stage has a set of different meaningful use criteria. As of the first half of 2014, all providers are meeting only stage 1 measures for meaningful use. Depending on when the provider started the meaningful use process, they will begin stage 2 measures for meaningful use in 2014. As the stages progress, the measures get more difficult. Providers are encouraged to participate in meaningful use as early as possible to receive available assistance.

Coding jobs take different forms and require different levels of preparation.

Outpatient coder. These coders may work in a doctor's office or other outpatient setting, such as a community health center. The associated credential would be AHIMA's CCA or the AAPC's CPC credential. In smaller offices, coding is often combined with other functions.

Same-day surgery centers or emergency rooms/departments. For these coding jobs, the CCA or CPC credential would suffice. These may not be full-time coding jobs, and may include other functions.

Information about health information credentials

Coding

AHIMA's Certified Coding Associate (CCA) – competency to work in any setting, but used primarily in physician practices and community health centers.

AHIMA's Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) and Certified Coding Specialist-Physician-based (CCS-P) – demonstrate mastery level skills in an area of specialty: hospital-based for the CCS and physician practice-based for the CCS-P.

AAPC's Certified Professional Coder (CPC) – competency to work in any setting, but used primarily in physician practices and community health centers.

Health Information Management

Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) – health information technicians ensure the quality of medical records by verifying their completeness, accuracy and proper entry into computer systems. One of the eligibility requirements for this credential is a degree from a CAHIM-accredited program. Within the CUNY system, the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)'s associate degree program in HIT is accredited. The CUNY School of Professional Studies is currently seeking accreditation for its HIM programs.

Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) – manages patient health information and medical records, administers computer information systems, collects and analyzes patient data and uses classification systems and medical terminologies. They often manage people and operational units, participate in administrative committees, and prepare budgets. Within the CUNY system, the School of Professional Studies has an on-line Bachelor's degree program in Health Information Management that prepares students for the RHIA credential.

Inpatient coder. These are jobs in hospitals, and this is where the labor market demand is greatest and the standards the highest. The AHIMA CCS credential, which is a higher credential than the CCA or the CPC, is generally required. Accurate coding is important to hospitals because coding is tied to revenue. Inpatient coding jobs are also higher-paying.

People with an Associate degree from a CUNY College in HIT (leading to AHIMA's RHIT credential) often work in acute care environments as records technicians, coders, or in supervisory positions. They might also run health information management departments in skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics or similar facilities. Some may become coders.

People with a Bachelor's degree in health information management (leading to AHIMA's RHIA credential) typically work in larger organizations, such as hospitals, insurance companies, health plans or Regional Extension Centers (REC) such NYC REACH[2]. People at this level might work as HIM managers, or at the non-managerial level, as health record analysts, certified coders or elsewhere in the revenue cycle. They may also work as quality analysts (in a hospital performance improvement department to assure that quality measures are being met), or in clinical documentation improvement (improving documentation at the point of care). Or they may work as clinical data analysts – looking at data after the fact.

Health IT. Health IT is IT in the health care field. People who work in this aspect of health information are IT professionals who have chosen to work in health care. Within Health IT, there are different types of jobs.

Infrastructure/networking jobs. These are the people who handle the local area and wide area networks. They perform software installations. They staff the help/service desks at different levels (I, II and III). These jobs can be at the technical certificate, Associate degree or Bachelor's degree level. Examples of entry-level jobs include help desk/desktop support and network administrator. Many non-profit organizations, private

[2] The New York City eHealth Collaborative, www.nycreach.org, offers guidance to physicians in New York City on adoption of new technologies, selecting software and hardware vendors, helping to make a smooth transition to electronic health records, and achieving meaningful use

training schools, colleges and universities educate and train students for these types of jobs.

Programming/database jobs. These jobs are generally higher-skilled and usually require a Bachelor's degree or higher or equivalent experience. Programmers or software developers may work directly for one of the large vendors of electronic health records systems. Most of these vendors are headquartered outside the New York area, although they may have some employees here. The vendors train clinicians and others to use these systems, which have been installed by hospitals, physicians and other health care providers.

Another class of jobs, including many that are available locally, involves customizing and re-building applications. EHR system vendors provide out-of-the-box, or enterprise, solutions, and health care systems often want something that is more customized to their needs. People in these "back-end" jobs may also design "integration solutions" between various EHR systems. There are also "front-end" jobs that require an understanding of both the clinical side and EHR. People in these jobs interact with clinicians, and prior experience as a clinician is desirable if not required.

Health IT jobs may be with IT firms, consulting firms, or health care facilities. Examples of programming/database jobs include web developer, applications analyst, business analyst, programming engineer, database administrator, and software developer. More senior types of health IT jobs include chief information officer, chief technology officer, data architect, director of clinical information systems, portfolio manager, and director of business intelligence.

The trade organization for people in these Health IT careers is the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS). The organization's mission is "better health through information technology."

Health Informatics. Health Informatics is the emerging field in health information and requires a high level of skill. Health informatics focuses on information systems, informatics principles and information technology as it is applied to the continuum of health care delivery. The minimum level of education usually required is a Master's degree. There are several different areas of health informatics, including: medical informatics, nursing informatics, public health informatics, and applied informatics. In all cases, these fields require people who understand clinical work flow or public health and electronic health records systems. People in these jobs might perform detailed cost and utilization analyses, create a data warehouse of health data, research health cost and utilization norms, keep abreast of trends and clinical studies, or undertake other sophisticated analyses.

The attached spreadsheet displays selected occupations in health information along with salary ranges and where these jobs are typically found.

Resources to learn more about health information jobs

- American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), www.ahima.org
- Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), www.himss.org
- New York Health Careers, www.healthcareersinfo.net
- Occupational Outlook Handbook http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-records-and-health-information-technicians.htm

This report was prepared by the New York City Labor Market Information Service (NYCLMIS) for the City University of New York (CUNY) CareerPATH Initiative. It was written by Ronnie Kauder, Senior Associate of the New York City Labor Market Information Service, with analytical support from Pam Corbett Hoberman, Research Associate. We would like to acknowledge the valuable insight and support provided by Ellen Shakespeare, Academic Director of the Health Information Program at CUNY's School of Professional Studies.

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Table 1. Health Information Offerings at the CUNY Colleges

		Continuing Education		30-Credit	Associate Degree		Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree	Ph.D
	College	Medical Billing & Coding	HIM & EHR	Health Care Office Admin	Comp Science	HIT	Comp Science	HIM	Comp Science	Comp Science
Manhattan	Baruch College						●		●	
	Borough of Manhattan Community College	●	●		●	●				
	City College of New York	●	●				●		●	●
	CUNY Graduate Center									●
	CUNY School of Professional Studies							●		
	Hunter College	●					●			
	Guttman Community College				●					
Queens	LaGuardia Community College	●			●					
	Queens College	●					●		●	
	Queensborough Community College	●		●	●					
	York College	●					●			
Brooklyn	Brooklyn College						●		●	
	Kingsborough Community College	●			●					
	Medgar Evers College	●			●		●			
	New York City College of Technology	●	●		●		●			
Bronx	Bronx Community College				●					
	Hostos Community College	●								
	Lehman College	●	●				●		●	
SI	College of Staten Island	●					●		●	

Table 2. Education and Place of Work for Health Information Occupations			
Occupation	**Type of Health Information Job**	**Pay Range in NYC***	**Where They Work**
HS Diploma and Training			
Medical Receptionist		$22,480 - $35,180	Health care providers: hospitals, outpatient care, and long-term care
Patient Registrar		*$22,000 - $30,000*	
Patient Services Rep		*$27,000 - $37,000*	
Medical Secretary		$33,600 - $47,100	
Medical Billing Clerk		$25,000 - $48,000	Health care providers and insurance carriers
Accounts Receivable Representative		$30,350- $54,040	Offices of physicians and hospitals
Post-HS Certificate or Associate Degree			
Certified Medical Coder (CCA or CPC)		*$27,000 - $39,000*	Outpatient care providers and emergency departments.
Certified Medical Coder (CCS)		*$31,000 - $44,000*	Hospitals
Health Record Analyst		*$31,000 - $44,000*	Hospitals, government-funded e-health collaborative, and staffing firms
Medical Records Technician		$32,990 - $50,100	Health care providers, health consulting firms
Help Desk/Desktop Support		$35,990 - $60,860	Health care providers, health insurance companies, and consulting firms
Associate Degree with experience			
Health Information Manager		*$42,000 - $59,000*	Skilled nursing/residential care facilities
Coding Manager		*$50,000 - $67,000*	Hospitals
Bachelor's degree			
Applications Analyst		*$44,000 - $60,000*	EHR vendors, consultants and health care providers
Health Information Manager		*$45,000 - $65,000*	Hospitals
Clinical data analyst		$46,600 - $86,360	Hospitals/health systems
Web Developer		*$44,550 - $85,270*	EHR vendors, consultants, and health care providers
Software Engineers		*$58,000 - $81,000*	
Database Developer/ Administrator		$54,400-$108,190	
Bachelor's degree with at least five years' experience			
Director of HIM		*$61,000 - $95,000*	Hospitals/health systems
Chief Technology Officer		*$110,000 - $180,000*	
MD or RN or PA + Master's degree in Health Informatics			
Informatics Nurse Specialist		*$69,000 - $89,000*	Hospitals/health systems, health insurance companies, and pharmaceutical companies
Clinical Informatics Specialist		*$69,000 - $93,000*	

KEY:

- Health Information Management Related
- Health Information Management
- Health IT
- Health Informatics

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