

PRIOR APPROVAL GUIDE



American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)

Prior Approval Guide

SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF THE PRIOR APPROVAL PROGRAM

The purpose of the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA's) Prior Approval Program is to recognize continuing education unit (CEU) providers that have met the Association's standards. This handbook provides information on the benefits, standards, and requirements of the Prior Approval Program. It also provides application information and lists AHIMA's procedures for monitoring approved programs.

AHIMA's prior approval process is voluntary and is initiated by the program sponsor requesting approval. Prior approval status does not constitute endorsement of a program sponsor or its materials. The program sponsor is responsible for maintaining the content and quality of any program that has received prior approval. Program sponsors may request prior approval of CEUs for program attendees holding any of the following credentials:

- Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA)
- Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT)
- Certified Coding Associate (CCA)
- Certified Coding Specialist (CCS)
- Certified Coding Specialist—Physician-based (CCS-P)
- Certified in Healthcare Privacy and Security (CHPS)
- Certified Health Data Analyst (CHDA)
- Certified in Healthcare Privacy (CHP)¹
- Certified in Healthcare Security (CHS)¹

AHIMA does not grant prior approval for review courses, study seminars, or similar offerings unrelated to providing CEUs for program attendees for the abovementioned credentials.

SECTION 2: EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND OBLIGATIONS

Program sponsors should:

- Provide AHIMA credential holders with quality programs in which attendees can report and receive AHIMA CEUs.
- Provide clearly stated and measurable learning objectives. The number of objectives will be appropriate for the type and length of the CEU activity.
- Provide qualified personnel who meet AHIMA's faculty and personnel requirements.
- Ensure that content and instructional methods are appropriate for the learning outcomes.

SECTION 3: BENEFITS OF PRIOR APPROVAL PROGRAM

Recognition

- Prior approved programs are recognized by AHIMA, HIM professionals, coders, and employers as programs that have met AHIMA's requirements for continuing education.

Marketing Opportunities

- Sponsoring organizations will communicate the value of the approved program to more than 60,000 potential AHIMA-credentialed individuals.
- Use of AHIMA's Statement of Approval, which may be added to marketing and other activities promoting your approved program.
- Confirmed numbers of CEUs
- Ease of submission of CEUs for attendees

SECTION 4: THE GENERAL APPLICATION PROCESS²

To apply for prior approval, applicants should:

1. Read through the entire Prior Approval Guide,
2. Fill out the prior approval application, and
3. Include all required supporting documentation and fees.

Incomplete applications will not be processed and will be returned to the program sponsor. Retroactive prior approval will not be granted.

Anticipate a four- to six-week turnaround time from the date the prior approval application is received.

After the application is approved, the sponsoring organization will receive a confirmation letter containing the number of CEUs the program has been approved for and the dates through which the program is valid.

Applications can be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed:

Attn: Prior Approval

AHIMA

Dept. 77-2735

Chicago, IL 60678-2735

Fax: (312) 233-1428

E-mail: priorapproval@ahima.org

You may also call (312) 233-1128 for more information.

¹Although AHIMA no longer offers these credentials, individuals holding these credentials continue to maintain their CEUs with AHIMA.

²Component State Associations (CSAs) are not required to apply for prior approval and may use AHIMA's approved advertising statement for CSA-sponsored programs. Prior approval is mandatory for the following types of programs: Internet educational offerings, independent and home study programs, and self-assessment activities, and distance education programs (including non-live audio seminars).

SECTION 5: AHIMA'S EVALUATION PROCESS

AHIMA will evaluate the proposed program for its content, quality, and the appropriateness of the following key characteristics:

- Title
- Instructor qualifications
- Agenda
- Core content area
- Course overview and delivery
- Target audience
- Total number of CEUs

AHIMA will deny approval to programs that fail to meet AHIMA requirements and expectations.

SECTION 6: TEACHING METHODS

The program *must meet one or more of the teaching methodologies* as presented below:

- Face-to-face seminar or workshop
- Face-to-face lecture or facilitated discussion
- Audio seminar
- Independent study or self-assessment
- Synchronous Web-based instruction
- Asynchronous Web-based instruction
- Other (please explain in detail on application)

SECTION 7: SPEAKER/FACULTY/DEVELOPER REQUIREMENTS

Faculty and personnel should: (1) be competent in the subject matter, (2) present materials based on current information, (3) be knowledgeable and skilled in instructional methods appropriate for adults, and (4) utilize instructional methods appropriate to meet educational objectives and learning outcomes. For content related to clinical coding, program faculty must possess AHIMA credentials. Please note: any changes to the program or its faculty after approval has been granted must be reported to AHIMA.

SECTION 8: REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

In addition to the application, AHIMA requires the following documents to be submitted:

Marketing Materials

The program sponsors must send a copy of the marketing brochure or flyer, certificate of participation, or a draft of the texts at the time in which the initial application is submitted for prior approval to AHIMA's Certification Division.

Once approved, the program may be advertised by using the following statement: **“This program has been approved for continuing education units (CEUs) for use in fulfilling the continuing education requirements of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA).”**

All materials submitted for consideration must contain the

following statement: **“Granting prior approval from AHIMA does not constitute endorsement of the program content or its program sponsor.”**

AHIMA does not provide pending approval for programs that have not completed the approval process. No advertising or documentation in this regard will be allowed.

AHIMA's name must not be used in any manner in conjunction with the approved program or its sponsoring organization, except as indicated in the statements above.

Prior approval does not allow for the use of AHIMA's logo.

Program Agenda

The program agenda should include, at minimum, an hour-by-hour content outline. Detailed PowerPoint slides or transcripts may take the place of the program agenda.

Evaluation

Attendees must be given the opportunity to evaluate the content and overall educational experience of the program. A sample copy of the evaluation should be included.

Please note, evaluations should not be sent to AHIMA. Evaluations are for program sponsor use only.

Temporary Access for Online Programs (Internet Only)

If the program is offered online, temporary access should be provided for review (URL, user name, and password).

Outcome Assessment (Internet, Independent/Home Study Programs Only)

An outcome assessment must be performed for Internet educational activities and independent study programs to ensure learning objectives were achieved.

Programs in the Form of a Self-Assessment Activity

The self-assessment activity must be a diagnostic tool that: (1) identifies areas of strength and weakness in relation to current HIM practice; (2) provides suggested resources for follow-up; and (3) provides evidence of completion.

Please submit the self-assessment activity in its entirety.

Certificate (Optional)

Program sponsors are encouraged to provide attendees with certificates or statements verifying attendance. The certificate or verification statement should include the name of the attendee, the title of the program conducted, the date of the program, the number of hours approved, and the signature of the program chairperson.

The certificate should not list AHIMA as the education provider. The appropriate text on certificates should read as

follows, “**This program has been approved by AHIMA for X CEUs.**”

SECTION 9: CALCULATING THE NUMBER OF CEUs

Total Number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) Requested:
CEUs are awarded as follows:

- Calculation of CEU hours is based upon clock hours. One CEU is given for each 60 minutes of live instruction or instruction that is fixed in length. Fractional parts of an hour less than 45 minutes in duration will not be awarded a full hour credit. If the program is 5½ hours long, 5 CEUs are awarded. Fractional parts of an hour, 45 minutes or over will be awarded a full hour credit.
- For educational activities that are not fixed in length, the program sponsors must employ an empirical process for calculating the number of equivalent clock hours for the activity. For example, the program sponsor could have a sample of individuals similar to the target audience complete the educational activity and outcomes evaluation. Then average the number of hours it took the individuals to complete the activity.
- Any program exceeding 25 CEUs will require additional in-house review by AHIMA.

SECTION 10: FEES AND CONTRACT

Program sponsors are required to pay two fees in order to receive prior approval. These fees consist of an “annual” component that is required once a year, and a “per CEU” component based on the number of CEUs submitted.

Annual Fee

Nonprofit organizations: \$150

For-profit organizations: \$300

The annual fee is valid for 365 days.

It is the responsibility of the program sponsor to submit the annual fee. AHIMA will not notify program sponsors regarding expiration of their annual fees, nor will program sponsors be billed by AHIMA in this regard.

Program Fee

Program fees are paid on an annual basis and are valid for 365 days after approval has been issued.

For-profit Charge: All programs are charged a minimum of \$150 per program regardless of whether or not the program sponsor is applying for less than 5 CEUs. Each additional CEU over 5 CEUs is charged at a rate of \$30 per CEU.

Nonprofit Charge: All programs are charged a minimum of \$75 per program regardless of whether or not the program sponsor is applying for less than 5 CEUs. Each additional CEU over 5 CEUs is charged at a rate of \$15 per CEU.

Contract for Prior Approval:

Carefully read the contract for Prior Approval of Continuing Education Program before signing. **Applications received without a printed name, title, signature, and date will be returned.**

SECTION 11: PROGRAM VALID DATES AND EXPIRATION

Each program is valid beginning with the date the program is first made available as an approved program. Programs expire upon the passing of 365 days. After 365 days, sponsoring organizations may renew a program’s approval by resubmitting a new application and payment.

Approval is only valid for the dates and locations originally applied for. Any additional program dates and locations will require a new application.

SECTION 12: AHIMA’S MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

AHIMA will monitor approved programs on an ongoing basis to ensure the requirements are consistently met. Some of the ways program sponsors are monitored are as follows:

- Attendees at approved programs are encouraged to contact AHIMA if they feel a program sponsor is not meeting the requirements for prior approval.
- AHIMA may periodically request program attendance information to gather feedback from attendees on the program sponsor’s performance in covering the requirements for prior approval.
- AHIMA may also request program materials or copies of certificates of attendance, or may attend activities to audit the efficacy of each program.

Complaints or Concerns

If AHIMA receives a complaint, or identifies through monitoring that a program sponsor may not be in compliance with the requirements for prior approval, AHIMA will contact the program sponsor in writing to request documentation for its investigation and request a response to the complaint or concern within thirty (30) days.

Probation

If the program sponsor fails to submit the documentation and a response to AHIMA within 30 days, the program sponsor will immediately be notified in writing and placed on probation for a ninety (90) day period.

Outcome of Probation

If a program sponsor sends AHIMA the appropriate documentation and response, and the investigation reveals that the complaint or concern does not support noncompliance, AHIMA will notify the program sponsor and remove the probationary status.

If a program sponsor does not comply with AHIMA's request for investigatory documentation or the documentation does not support compliance with the requirements for prior approval, the program sponsor will be notified via secure mail, of revocation of prior approval status at the end of the 90-day probation period. The annual fee will not be refunded.



Attn: Prior Approval
AHIMA
Dept. 77-2735
Chicago, IL 60678-2735

APPLICATION FOR PRIOR APPROVAL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Instructions: All portions of this form must be completed for the application to be processed. **Incomplete applications will be returned.**

I. PROGRAM SPONSOR INFORMATION

Sponsorship Category:

Nonprofit:

- Educational facility
- Association/society/hospital
- Other, please describe: _____

For-profit:

- Corporate
- Private
- Other, please describe: _____

Sponsoring Organization _____

Co-sponsoring Organization(s) _____

Contact Person Name and Title _____

Address _____	City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
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Phone _____	Fax _____
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E-mail _____

The annual fee was:

- Paid with this application (your program will be valid for 365 days).
- Previously paid. When? _____

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Title: _____ Program Length (in hours and/or minutes): _____

AHIMA Core Educational Content Area*:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Data Management <input type="checkbox"/> External Forces <input type="checkbox"/> Privacy and Security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Management Development <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Foundations |
|---|--|

Total number of continuing education units (CEUs) requested: _____

Please indicate how the number of units was calculated: _____

Teaching Methodology (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face seminar or workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Audio seminar <input type="checkbox"/> Synchronous Web-based instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face lecture or facilitated discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Independent study or self-assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Asynchronous Web-based instruction |
|---|---|

Program Dates of Access and Locations (attach additional sheet if more space is needed):

Start Date _____	End Date _____	City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
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Start Date _____	End Date _____	City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
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Start Date _____	End Date _____	City _____	State _____	Zip Code _____
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Speaker/Faculty/Developer of Activity: Please include credentials as they relate to expertise on the topic to be presented, and submit a CV or resume. Please note: coding programs require an AHIMA-credentialed speaker, faculty participant, or developer.

Content—What topics will be covered?

*Domains and explanations may be found at www.ahima.org/certification

Learner Objectives—What knowledge or skills should the participant have after the lecture or activity?

Evaluation Methods—How will the program be evaluated to determine if it was successful in achieving its objectives? Please include a sample evaluation form.

May participants receive partial credit for partial attendance? Yes No

If yes, please explain how the units will be awarded and how partial attendance will be determined:

Estimated Number of Participants: _____ Participant Fees or Tuition: \$ _____

- Target Audience (check all that apply):**
- Health information practitioners
 - Coders and billers
 - Managers/supervisors
 - Educators
 - Compliance officers
 - Privacy officers
 - Cancer registrants
 - Physicians
 - Nurses
 - Other, please specify _____

Additional Documents Required: Please make sure the following documents have been included (if applicable):

- Marketing materials (required for all programs)
 - Program agenda (required for all programs)
 - Evaluation (required for all programs)
 - Temporary access for online programs (Internet only)
 - Outcome assessment (Internet, independent and home study programs only)
 - Self-assessment activity (programs in the form of a self-assessment activity must be submitted in their entirety).
- For a definition of what qualifies as a self-assessment, please consult your Prior Approval Guide.
- Certificate (optional)

III. APPLICATION FEES: Please enter the appropriate annual fee and CEU fees as follows:

		Number of CEUs	Amount
Annual Fees:	For profit (\$300) _____		
	Nonprofit (\$150) _____		
CEU Fees:	For profit (\$150 minimum for 5 CEUs or \$30 each for more than 5) _____		
	Nonprofit (\$75 minimum for 5 CEUs or \$15 each for more than 5) _____		
Total:	_____		

Attach Check, or Credit Card Information

CC# _____ Exp. date: _____

Credit card type (please check one): AmEx VISA MC

Name on credit card: _____

Contract for Prior Approval

As the representative of the sponsoring organization, I have reviewed AHIMA's requirements for prior approval of a continuing education program and agree to abide by them. Specifically, I agree that:

- I will submit a copy of the marketing brochure for this program within 14 days of receiving approval.
- The required statement signifying prior approval of this program will appear on all marketing materials and on any other materials where AHIMA's approval is cited.
- If this program is repeated after approval has expired, a new application will be submitted and prior approval by AHIMA will not be advertised until the approval is received.
- AHIMA or its name will not be used in any manner in conjunction with this program or its sponsoring organization except as allowed by AHIMA's requirements for prior approval.

I understand that failure to follow all requirements for prior approval may result in immediate revocation of the prior approval and may prohibit prior approval of any future program by the program sponsor.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

(AHIMA USE ONLY)

Completion Date: _____ CE Hours Approved: _____ Confirmation Sent: _____ Core Ed. Content: _____ Fee: _____

Comments: _____

Reviewer: _____ ID Number: _____



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