AHIMA Code of Ethics

Preamble

The ethical obligations of the health information management (HIM) professional include the safeguarding of privacy and security of health information; appropriate disclosure of health information; development, use, and maintenance of health information systems and health information; and ensuring the accessibility and integrity of health information.

Healthcare consumers are increasingly concerned about security and the potential loss of privacy and the inability to control how their personal health information is used and disclosed. Core health information issues include what information should be collected, how the information should be managed, who should have access to the information, under what conditions the information should be disclosed, how the information is retained, when it is no longer needed, and how it is disposed of in a confidential manner. All of the core health information issues are addressed in compliance with state and federal regulations, and employer policies and procedures.

Ethical obligations are central to the professional's responsibility, regardless of the employment site or the method of collection, storage, and security of health information. In addition, sensitive information (e.g., genetic, adoption, substance use, sexual health, and behavioral information) requires special attention to prevent misuse. In the world of business and interactions with consumers, expertise in the protection of information is required.

Purpose of the American Health Information Management Association Code of Ethics

The HIM professional has an obligation to demonstrate actions that reflect values. The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Code of Ethics sets forth these principles. (See also AHIMA Mission, Vision, Values) The code is relevant to all AHIMA members, non-members with the Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) certifications, and students enrolled in a formal certificate or degree granting program directly relevant to AHIMA’s Purpose regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. These purposes strengthen the HIM professional’s efforts to improve overall quality of healthcare.

The AHIMA Code of Ethics serves six purposes:

- Promotes high standards of HIM practice.
- Summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values.
- Establishes a set of ethical principles to be used to guide decision-making and actions.
- Establishes a framework for professional behavior and responsibilities when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
- Provides ethical principles by which the general public can hold the HIM professional accountable.
• Mentors practitioners new to the field to HIM’s mission, values, and ethical principles.

The code includes principles that are enforceable and aspirational. The extent to which each principle is enforceable is a matter of professional judgment to be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical principles.

Principles

The following principles are based on the core values of the American Health Information Management Association and apply to all AHIMA members, non-members CCHIIM certifications, and students.

A health information management professional shall:

1. Advocate, uphold, and defend the consumer's right to privacy and the doctrine of confidentiality in the use and disclosure of information.

2. Put service and the health and welfare of persons before self-interest and conduct oneself in the practice of the profession so as to bring honor to oneself, their peers, and to the health information management profession.

3. Preserve, protect, and secure personal health information in any form or medium and hold in the highest regard health information and other information of a confidential nature obtained in an official capacity, taking into account the applicable statutes and regulations.

4. Refuse to participate in or conceal unethical practices or procedures and report such practices.

5. Use technology, data, and information resources in the way they are intended to be used.

6. Advocate for appropriate uses of information resources across the healthcare ecosystem.

7. Recruit and mentor students, peers and colleagues to develop and strengthen professional workforce.

8. Represent the profession to the public in a positive manner.

9. Advance health information management knowledge and practice through continuing education, research, publications, and presentations.

10. Perform honorably health information management association responsibilities, either appointed or elected, and preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information made known in any official capacity.

11. State truthfully and accurately one’s credentials, professional education, and experiences.
12. Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration in situations supporting ethical health information principles.

13. Respect the inherent dignity and worth of every person.

Acknowledgement

Adapted with permission from the 1999 Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers.

Resources


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