Introduction

The Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) is the official certifying body for the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). AHIMA is a not-for-profit, professional membership association, whose mission is:

“To be the professional community that improves healthcare by advancing best practices and standards for health information management and the trusted source for education, research, and professional credentialing.”

The mission of CCHIIM is:

“Through certification, the CCHIIM assures the competency of professionals practicing health informatics and information management worldwide.”

In order for a candidate to obtain an AHIMA credential, all candidates must comply with the CCHIIM standards for initial certification and complete the CCHIIM certification process, which consists of the following: 1) Meeting or exceeding all education and experience eligibility requirements established by CCHIIM for the respective credential, 2) paying all published fees, as applicable, for the respective credential, and 3) passing the certification examination for the respective credential.

All individuals currently certified by AHIMA must demonstrate an ongoing professional commitment to the health informatics and information management (HIIM) domains, in order to comply with the CCHIIM standards for recertification (certification maintenance).

AHIMA and CCHIIM do not discriminate against any candidate on the basis of race, color, creed, age, gender, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, parental status, ancestry, sexual orientation, military discharge status, or source of income. All examination applicants will be judged solely on the certification standards established by CCHIIM.
PROCESS OVERVIEW

CCHIIM operates under the auspices of AHIMA.

Per AHIMA bylaws, and as further codified in a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AHIMA and CCHIIM, CCHIIM shall have sole and independent authority in all matters pertaining to both the initial certification and ongoing recertification (certification maintenance) of HIIM professionals.

This authority includes the decision rights for both the initial awarding of AHIMA credentials to individuals, as well as the ongoing formal recognition of AHIMA certified professionals through recertification (certification maintenance).

The CCHIIM appeals process is designed to operate without the involvement or assistance of attorneys because the process is not a legal proceeding. Accordingly, candidates or certificants communicate directly with AHIMA Certification Staff throughout all steps of the appeals process.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to protect the privacy of all parties involved in matters arising under these procedures, all documentation submitted by candidates or certificants, and all documentation prepared by either AHIMA Certification Staff, CCHIIM Appeals Committee, or CCHIIM, will be considered confidential, per CCHIIM confidentiality policy and procedures.

PARTICIPANTS

AHIMA Certification Staff, CCHIIM Appeals Committee, and CCHIIM as a whole may be involved in one or more steps of this appeals process, as warranted.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

By submitting an appeal and the required processing fee, candidates or certificants agree to abide with the designated requirements and timelines appearing in this appeal procedure, and to behave in a courteous, professional, and timely manner at all times when communicating with AHIMA Certification Staff, CCHIIM Appeals Committee, or CCHIIM Chair. Failure or refusal to comply with these conduct expectations by the certificant or candidate may result in a summary rejection of the appeal by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee.
FULL DISCLOSURE

Any candidate or certificant submitting an appeal is expected to fully disclose any and all information related to the appeal. Any candidate or certificant providing improper, false, or otherwise misleading information or documentation, or making improper, false, or otherwise misleading representations throughout the appeals process, may result in a summary rejection of the appeal by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee.

Further, the discovery of failure to properly disclose information or documentation, or the discovery of improper, false, or otherwise misleading representations by the candidate or certificant, may be considered as a potential ethics violation regarding misconduct, and submitted to the AHIMA Professional Ethics Committee for review.

CCHIIM Actions and Decisions Concerning Certification Examination Eligibility

CCHIIM will make one of the following decisions regarding a candidate’s eligibility for each certification examination:

1. Accept the candidate’s application;

2. Request additional or supplemental information from the candidate;

3. Reject the candidate’s application on the ground(s) that:
   a. the candidate does not meet the relevant credentials’ published eligibility requirements; or
   b. the candidate has violated, or acted contrary to, a CCHIIM policy or rule.

4. CCHIIM may accept a candidate’s application based on his/her attestation that the candidate meets or exceeds the published eligibility requirements for the respective certification exam, as an alternative to requiring that the candidate provide documentation to verify eligibility.

For all applications where attestations are required in lieu of documentation to verify eligibility, CCHIIM reserves the right to randomly audit, on a monthly basis, all certificants that receive a passing score on the respective certification examination.

If a certificant is audited, he/she will have thirty (30) calendar days to provide documentation that verifies his/her eligibility. Certificants unable to provide the required documentation for verification of eligibility within thirty (30) calendar days
will have their test results nullified and will forfeit all previously submitted fees with respect to the certification examination application.

CCHIIM Actions and Decisions Concerning Certification Examination Results

CCHIIM will inform each candidate whether he/she has achieved a passing or failing score on the respective certification examination. Where a candidate acts contrary to CCHIIM policies during the administration of any certification examination(s) in whole or part, the candidate may be prevented from taking or completing the certification examination(s), and / or other appropriate action. Specifically, candidate behavior contrary to CCHIIM policies may be interpreted as one or more potential violations of the AHIMA Code of Ethics.

CCHIIM Actions and Decisions Concerning Recertification (certification maintenance)

CCHIIM will make one of the following decisions regarding a certificant’s recertification (certification maintenance) application:

1. Grant recertification (certification maintenance) status for an additional two-year period;
2. Request additional information;
3. Waive requirements by exception;
4. Temporarily inactivate a certificants’ status, pending satisfactory completion and / or verification of all recertification requirements, including submission of all published fees, as applicable. Please refer to recertification (certification maintenance policy for additional information.
5. Reject the application on the ground(s) that: a. the certificant does not meet the necessary criteria for recertification (certification maintenance), or b. the certificant has violated, or acted contrary to, a CCHIIM policy or rule, or
6. Revoke a certificants’ credential. Please refer to the CCHIIM operating code, and/or the recertification (certification maintenance) policy for additional information.
COMPLAINTS – Code of Ethics / Professional Misconduct

The AHIMA Code of Ethics applies to AHIMA members and credentialed professionals who are not members. If you believe an AHIMA member or credentialed professional has violated the Code of Ethics, you may file a complaint with AHIMA.

Specifically, potential ethics violations regarding misconduct that involve currently certified individuals (i.e., certificants), irrespective of AHIMA membership status, that are unrelated to certification examination eligibility, certification exam performance, and recertification (certification maintenance), must be submitted to the AHIMA Professional Ethics Committee. A separate AHIMA Professional Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures is used for potential ethics violations regarding misconduct, pursuant to the AHIMA Code of Ethics, which can be found at the AHIMA website.

APPEALS – Eligibility, Examination Performance, or Recertification (certification maintenance)

CCHIIM appeals are strictly limited to disputes regarding certification examination eligibility, certification exam performance, and recertification (certification maintenance). All other inquiries, questions, and concerns regarding AHIMA credentials or their respective certification examinations are regarded as complaints and are managed accordingly through the AHIMA Certification Department complaint policy and procedures.

Appeals regarding certification examination eligibility, certification exam performance, and recertification (certification maintenance), must be submitted in writing to CCHIIM Appeals at the specific address listed in the CCHIIM appeals submission form within thirty (30) calendar days after the adverse decision or notification. A mandatory processing fee must accompany the written appeal. Appeals submitted without this processing fee will not be considered by CCHIIM.

Step #1: INITIAL REVIEW

CCHIIM appeals are managed through a progressive process which begins with an initial review by AHIMA Certification Staff.

Grounds for Initial Review: A candidate or certificant may submit to AHIMA Certification Staff an initial request for review of an adverse CCHIIM action or decision based on any of the following grounds:
The candidate was found to be ineligible to take or complete the Certification Examination;

The candidate did not pass or successfully complete the Certification Examination; or,

The candidate or certificant failed to satisfy a certification or recertification (certification maintenance) requirement, including those requirements related to qualifications, education, and experience, or was otherwise ineligible for certification or recertification.

**Required Components of a Request for an Initial Review:** A candidate or certificant may submit a request for review of an adverse certification-related action or decision by notifying AHIMA Certification Staff in writing. The candidate or certificant must use the appeals submission form, and explain in detail: 1) The nature of the request and the specific facts and circumstances supporting the request, and 2) all reasons why the action or decision should be changed or modified. The candidate or certificant must also provide accurate copies of all supporting documents. The mandatory processing fee must accompany the completed appeal submission form. Written requests for review or appeals submitted without this mandatory processing fee will not be considered further by either AHIMA Certification staff or by CCHIIM.

**Deadlines and Time Period for Submitting a Request for an Initial Review:** In order for a request for review to be considered by AHIMA Certification Staff, the written request must be received within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the adverse action.

**Actions of AHIMA Certification Staff:** Upon receipt, all requests for review will be considered by AHIMA Certification Staff or other authorized CCHIIM representative, as appropriate. Following the review of the candidate’s or certificant’s request, AHIMA Certification Staff will acknowledge receipt of the request within ten (10) calendar days, and may take the following actions:

**Resolution of an Initial Review:** AHIMA Certification Staff will resolve and decide the matter based on the record, including relevant and credible information presented by the candidate or certificant. The review resolution will include the findings of AHIMA Certification Staff and a summary of the relevant facts upon which the decision is based, and may uphold or modify the adverse action or decision, or indicate other appropriate action, as necessary. AHIMA Certification Staff will issue the review resolution within thirty (30) days of receipt of the request, or as soon thereafter as is practical; or,

**Referral of an Initial Review as a First Appeal:** AHIMA Certification Staff may refer the matter to the CCHIIM Appeals Committee for resolution as a first appeal. AHIMA
Certification Staff will provide the Certification Appeals Committee with all relevant materials, including the documents and materials submitted by the candidate or certificant.

Step #2: FIRST APPEAL

CCHIIM Appeals Committee: Three (3) members of CCHIIM will be appointed to serve as the CCHIIM Appeals Committee to resolve first appeals or referred matters. Subject to the limitations set forth in these procedures, the CCHIIM Appeals Committee will hear and resolve a first appeal where:

The matter has been referred by AHIMA Certification Staff; or,

A candidate or certificant is dissatisfied with the initial review and action of AHIMA Certification Staff and requests a first appeal consistent with these procedures.

Grounds for a First Appeal: In order for a first appeal to be considered by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee, the first appeal submission must contain substantial information supporting at least one of the following grounds:

The candidate’s eligibility to sit for the Certification Examination(s), or other eligibility for certification, was denied incorrectly;

The candidate’s Certification Examination(s) was scored incorrectly, or was not credited with an appropriate response to particular questions, and as a direct result of the incorrect scoring the candidate is entitled to receive a passing score on the examination(s);

The candidate was barred or otherwise prohibited incorrectly from taking the Certification Examination(s) or from becoming certified; or,

The certificant’s application for recertification (certification maintenance) was incorrectly rejected under the relevant CCHIIM standard(s) for recertification (certification maintenance), and the certificant would have qualified for recertification (certification maintenance) if the correct standards had been applied, or the certificant was otherwise incorrectly found ineligible for recertification.

Content of a First Appeal: In order for a first appeal to be considered by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee, the first appeal submission must contain the following information:
The identity and signature of the candidate or certificant submitting the first appeal;

A detailed explanation of the reasons and basis for the first appeal, as defined by, and limited to, the aforementioned grounds as a basis for a first appeal;

All objections, corrections, and factual information the candidate or certificant believes to be relevant to the first appeal;

The names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses, if available, of any persons with factual information relevant to the first appeal, and a clear description of the factual information available from these persons; and,

Copies of any and all relevant documents, exhibits, or other information the candidate or certificant wants to submit in support of the first appeal.

**Deadlines and Time Period for Submitting a First Appeal:** A candidate or certificant seeking to present a first appeal must submit a written, signed first appeal, consistent with the requirements of these procedures, to the CCHIIM Appeals Committee within thirty (30) calendar days of the date appearing on the informal review resolution notice received from AHIMA Certification Staff.

**First Appeals: Request for Extension** – Upon written request by the candidate or certificant, and when received no later than fifteen (15) calendar days of the date appearing on the informal review resolution notice received from AHIMA Certification Staff, the CCHIIM Appeals Committee Chair may, in his or her discretion, extend the time period for filing the first appeal. Denials of time extension requests are not subject to appeal.

First appeals received beyond given time periods will not be reviewed or considered by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee, except upon a written request showing good cause, as determined by the Certification Appeals Committee.

**First Appeals: Deficiencies** – The CCHIIM Appeals Committee Chair may require the candidate or certificant to clarify, supplement, or amend a first appeal submission.

**First Appeals: Rejection** – If the CCHIIM Appeals Committee Chair determines that a first appeal does not meet the first appeal requirements or otherwise warrant further formal review, consistent with the requirements set forth in these procedures, the first appeal will be rejected. The CCHIIM Appeals Committee Chair will notify the candidate or certificant of the rejection, as
well as the reason(s) for the rejection, by letter within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the first appeal request, or as soon thereafter as is practical. First appeal rejection determinations are not subject to appeal.

Decision of the CCHIIM Appeals Committee: The CCHIIM Appeals Committee will resolve and decide the first appeal based on the record, including relevant and credible information presented by the candidate or certificant, CCHIIM policies, and, if applicable, the action or decision(s) of AHIMA Certification Staff. The CCHIIM Appeals Committee Decision will include the Committee findings and a summary of the relevant facts upon which the decision is based, and may uphold or modify the decision(s) of AHIMA Certification Staff, or indicate other appropriate action. The CCHIIM Appeals Committee will issue the decision within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the first appeal request, or as soon thereafter as is practical.

Step #3: FINAL APPEAL

CCHIIM Final Appeals Panel: The CCHIIM Chair, with the assistance of the AHIMA Vice President of Certification, will appoint three (3) AHIMA Certified Professionals in good standing to serve to hear the final appeal. These individuals shall constitute the Final Appeals Panel for that particular case. Individuals who have no conflict of interest will be appointed. Subject to the limitations set forth in these procedures, this Final Appeals Panel will hear and resolve a final appeal where a candidate or certificant is dissatisfied with the CCHIIM Appeals Committee Decision, and submits an appropriate final appeal consistent with these procedures.

Grounds for Final Appeal: In order for a final appeal to be considered by CCHIIM, the final appeal submission must contain substantial information supporting at least one of the following grounds. The grounds upon which a final appeal may be based are strictly limited to the following:

Procedural Error: The CCHIIM Appeals Committee decision misapplied a procedural rule contained in these rules, and the rule misapplication significantly prejudiced the candidate or certificant with respect to the outcome of the first appeal decision;

New or Previously Undiscovered Information: Following the issuance of the CCHIIM Appeals Committee decision, the candidate or certificant located relevant information and facts that were not previously available and that would have significantly affected the outcome of the CCHIIM Appeals Committee decision in the candidate’s or certificant’s favor;
Misapplication of Certification Standards: The CCHIIM Appeals Committee decision misapplied the relevant certification or recertification standards, and the misapplication significantly prejudiced the candidate or certificant and the outcome of the first appeal decision; or,

Contrary to the Information Presented: The CCHIIM Appeals Committee decision clearly is contrary to the most substantial information in the record.

With respect to the grounds listed above, CCHIIM will consider only final appeals that were previously presented to, and acted upon by, the CCHIIM Appeals Committee as a first appeal.

Contents of Final Appeal: In order for a final appeal to be considered by the CCHIIM Final Appeals Panel, the final appeal submission must contain the following information:

The identity and signature of the candidate or certificant submitting the final appeal;

A detailed explanation of the reasons and basis for the final appeal, as defined by, and limited to, the aforementioned grounds as a basis for a final appeal;

All objections, corrections, and factual information the candidate or certificant believes to be relevant to the final appeal, including all documents and exhibits in support of the final appeal;

The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of any persons not previously identified with factual information relevant to the final appeal, and a clear description of the factual information available from these persons; and,

Copies of any and all relevant documents, exhibits, or other information the candidate or certificant wants to submit in support of the appeal.

Deadlines and Time Period for Submitting Final Appeal: A candidate or certificant seeking to present a final appeal must submit a written, signed appeal, consistent with the requirements of these procedures, to CCHIIM within thirty (30) calendar days of the date appearing on the first appeal decision notice received from the CCHIIM Appeals Committee.

Final Appeals: Request for Extension – Upon written request by the candidate or certificant, and when received no later than fifteen (15) calendar days of the date appearing on the first appeal decision notice received from the CCHIIM Appeals Committee, the CCHIIM Chair may, at
his or her discretion, extend the time period for filing the first appeal. Denials of time extension requests are not subject to appeal.

Final appeals received beyond given time periods will not be reviewed or considered by CCHIIM, except upon a written request showing good cause, as determined by the CCHIIM Chair.

**Final Appeals: Deficiencies** – The CCHIIM Chair or authorized representative may require the candidate or certificant to clarify, supplement, or amend a final appeal submission.

**Final Appeal Rejection:** If the CCHIIM Chair or authorized representative determines that a final appeal does not meet the final appeal requirements or otherwise warrant further formal review, consistent with the requirements set forth in these procedures, the final appeal will be rejected. The CCHIIM Chair or authorized representative will notify the candidate or certificant of the rejection, as well as the reason(s) for the rejection, by letter within thirty (30) calendar days of the determination, or as soon thereafter as is practical. Appeal rejection determinations are not subject to appeal.

**Scheduling of the Meeting for Final Appeal Consideration:** The CCHIIM Chair or authorized representative will schedule a meeting for the purpose of considering the final appeal within sixty (60) days of receipt of the written final appeal, which can take place in-person, by conference call, or by video conference. The candidate or certificant will be informed of this meeting date. CCHIIM will conduct this meeting of the Final Appeals Panel in order to review and consider all of the available proof and information, including the record of the first appeal and the materials submitted by the candidate or certificant.

**Requests for Oral Presentations:** The candidate or certificant may petition the CCHIIM Chair for the opportunity to present an oral statement in-person to the Final Appeals Panel. This request must be included as a part of the final appeal submission. The candidate or certificant will bear his/her own costs for presenting this oral statement. Up to forty-five (45) minutes will be scheduled for a candidate’s or certificant’s oral presentation. If granted, only the candidate or certificant will be allowed to speak on his/her behalf. Such participation shall be at the sole discretion of the CCHIIM Chair, and the Commission as a whole nor the Final Appeals Panel shall in no circumstance conduct a trial type hearing. No witnesses, cross examination of witnesses, rules of evidence, or other trial-type proceeding will be applicable. The Commission may, on the advice of its counsel, provide orderly operating guidelines to govern the proceeding. All decisions of the Commission as to such procedural matters will be final.
Final Appeal Decision of CCHIIM: CCHIIM will resolve and decide the final appeal based on the record, including relevant and credible information presented by the candidate or certificant, CCHIIM policies, and the action or decision of the CCHIIM Final Appeals Panel. The Final Appeal Decision will include the findings of CCHIIM a summary of the relevant facts upon which the decision is based, and may uphold or modify the decision of the CCHIIM Certification Appeals Committee, or indicate other appropriate action. CCHIIM will issue the final appeal decision within thirty (30) calendar days of the end of the final appeal review, or within thirty (30) calendar days after an in-person meeting of the Commission, or as soon thereafter as is practical.

Conditions for Finalizing and Closing Appeals: An appeal will be closed, and all proceedings ended, when any of the following occurs:

- An informal review has been resolved by AHIMA Certification Staff to the satisfaction of the candidate or certificant;
- A decision has been rendered for a first appeal by the CCHIIM Appeals Committee to the satisfaction of the candidate or certificant;
- A decision has been rendered for a final appeal by the CCHIIM Final Appeals Panel;
- The allowable time period for the filing of an appeal under these procedures and rules has passed or lapsed; or
- The appeal has been withdrawn or terminated by the candidate or certificant.

###
Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) Appeal Submission Form

SECTION A: Candidate or Certificant Information

1. First Name: ______________ MI:____ Last Name: ___________________

2. Address: ____________________________________________________________
   City: ____________________ State: _____ Zip Code: ____________________
   Country: _________________ AHIMA ID Number (if applicable: ______________
   Email:  ____________________________________ Phone: ___________________

SECTION 2: Appeal Information

1. For which of the following exams are you submitting an appeal?

   - CCA
   - CCS
   - CCS-P
   - RHIA
   - RHIT
   - CHPS
   - CHDA

2. Nature of your Appeal

   - Certification Examination Eligibility
   - Certification Examination Results
   - Recertification (Certification Maintenance)

3. Appeal Being Submitted for:

   - Initial Review
   - First Appeal

   Request for consideration of extension for submission of First Appeal (per CCHIIM appeal policy)
Final Appeal

Request for consideration of extension for submission of Final Appeal (per CCHIIM appeal policy)

Request for opportunity to present an oral statement as part of the Final Appeal process (per CCHIIM appeal policy)

4. Supporting Documentation for Appeal (Please describe each document being submitted as part of this appeal submission form)

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

SECTION 3: Fees and Mailing Information

1. Appeal Processing Fee: $45.00

   Method of Payment

   Check/Money Order: Payable to AHIMA

   Credit Card: Visa/ MasterCard /American Express
   (If payment is by credit card please provide the following information)

   Account #: ________________________________
   Exp.Date: ________________________________
   Signature: ________________________________

   Per CCHIIM appeal policy, all submitted appeals must include this mandatory fee, and must be included with the original submission for an initial review.

2. Submit Completed Form and Fee to:

   Attn: CCHIIM Certification Appeals
   AHIMA
   233 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Fl.
   Chicago, IL 60601

   I certify that the information provided within this CCHIIM appeals submission form is true and accurate.

   Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________