

Case Study IV. Work Environment

The new quality management (QM) director is a dually-credentialed HIM professional and Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality. As one of the conditions of her acceptance of employment, she indicated that she would need latitude to attend educational offerings to ensure her continuing education unit (CEU) obligations were met. She frequently attends meetings, both locally and nationally; however, she does not extend the same opportunities to her credentialed staff, citing the workload as the obstacle. Despite several creative plans that were presented by the staff, which include hosting a meeting at their facility, the QM director will not approve these activities. The staff cannot secure the meeting space without her approval. Is there an ethical violation, dilemma, or concern?

This scenario presents an ethical concern if there are no organizational limitations, such as policies or practices that limits staff level employee reimbursements for continuing education. The new QM director should try to respect the educational and professional needs of her staff. The perception of her staff is that she is placing her self-interest above theirs by frequently attending professional meetings, while not honoring their requests to develop creative ways to meet their continuing educational needs. This may indirectly reflect that she does not value the credentials of her staff.

If there are budgetary restraints, the director should take the opportunity to listen to her staff and develop an opportunity for her staff to continue their education. The opportunity will have a positive impact on the organization.

1. *What was the AHIMA member's actions that resulted in an ethics violation being brought forward?*

The QM director is placing her self-interest above her staff's by frequently attending professional meetings and not honoring their requests to develop creative ways to meet their continuing educational needs.

2. *What AHIMA Ethical Code has been violated?*

The principles and guidelines that this member possibly violated include:

Principle 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, peers, and to the health information management profession.

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

Guideline 5.1. Use healthcare employer technology resources within the confines of organizational policies.

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

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

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

3. *What is the potential harm to the organization or AHIMA as a result of the act?*

The QM director is not supporting her staff or allowing them opportunities to maintain their credentials. Without the opportunity to obtain the CEUs, staff will possibly be in jeopardy of losing their credentials. Also, the staff may not see that these credentials are valued. It can be perceived as damaging the engagement of the staff.

4. *What is the status of the AHIMA member's training, education, and awareness of the AHIMA Code of Ethics?*

The QM director is credentialed and assumed to be a member. As a member of AHIMA, members are to be aware and adhere to the Code of Ethics. Each year, members and credentialed nonmembers must agree to abide by the Code of Ethics when joining AHIMA or renewing AHIMA Membership.

Resolution: The member is encouraged to leverage technology and other resources to encourage opportunities for continue education for all credentialed staff members.