

## **Stark State College of Technology**

### **Health Information Management Technology Occupation and Program Fact Sheet**

#### **What Does A Health Information Technician Do?**

The Health Information Technician is a professional with a unique blend of clinical knowledge and information management skills, who:

- Codes diagnoses and procedures for reimbursement and research purposes
- Applies laws and regulations relative to maintenance, disclosure, confidentiality and retention of health information
- Processes, analyzes, and graphically displays data to support clinical and business decision making
- Uses computer applications to manage health information.

#### **Is The Health Information Technology Career Field Right For Me?**

Making a decision about a career is a difficult one. If you are interested in information technology, business administration, law and the improvement of health care and you are an organized, detail oriented individual, this diverse career field may be just right for you! A strong background in health sciences, health information technology courses, and computer sciences are vital to the work the Health Information Technician does.

Visiting the Health Information Services (Medical Record) Department of a hospital is one way of learning about this career field. During this tour, the student will see the many job functions, computer applications, medical records and other information used in the daily activities of the Health Information Technician. It is a requirement that all students tour a Health Information (Medical Record) Services Department, if they plan on enrolling in the program. Information (tour form) indicating which hospitals in the local area give tours and who to contact can be obtained from the Admissions Office.

#### **Where Do Health Information Technicians Work? What Are The Working Conditions?**

The functions performed by Health Information Technicians are numerous and are continually changing. The job title and work setting dictates the actual tasks and responsibilities. They are primarily employed in hospitals, long-term care, group practices, clinics, mental health facilities, HMO's, rehabilitation facilities, medical billing companies, social service agencies, etc. Working conditions are usually very flexible, primarily day shift, and no weekends or holidays.

Some jobs, like medical coding, require the employee to meet productivity and quality standards; therefore, the job can be stressful.

### **What Is The Job Outlook For Health Information Technicians?**

Health Information Technician or Specialist is one of the fastest growing occupations in the country today. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, "employment of medical records and Health Information Technicians is expected to grow much faster than average for all occupations through 2014 because of rapid growth in the number of medical tests, treatments, and procedures that will be increasingly scrutinized by health insurance companies, regulators, courts, and consumers.

### **How Flexible Is The Program In Meeting Individual Scheduling Needs?**

After meeting the pre-requisites, the student must complete a Health Technologies Rolling Admission Application Form to apply to the program. The HIT program at SSCT is a 2-year Associate degree program. A new group (24) of students starts the program every fall semester. Some students choose to reduce their workload by taking general study courses prior to formal program entry. These options are important considerations for those whose work or whose family responsibilities might otherwise prevent them from pursuing an education. Once accepted, the HIT courses for the associate degree must be taken as outlined and are only held during the day. They are scheduled so that students can usually still work. General study courses are available during the day and night. Students may also receive credit for classes based on work experience and may test out of a class (up to 12 credit hours) by taking a proficiency test.

### **How Soon Can I Be Accepted Into The Health Information Management Technology Program?**

Most all of the health programs at Stark State College have waiting lists, therefore, you should check to see for what year the program is currently accepting applications. It is important to note that the waiting list changes continuously. Students change their mind, have difficulty meeting academic standards, drop off the list for personal reasons, etc. As we delete names, we automatically move students up who are waiting. While you are waiting to start the core program courses you may take any or all of the general study courses which would lessen your course load. If you are also interested in pursuing a Bachelor's degree in HIM, additional courses can be suggested to help meet the bachelor degree requirements.

### **Does The Program Have A Clinical Component?**

During Semester II, students spend approximately eight observation hours in a nontraditional health care facility, as part of the Ancillary Health Records and Registries Course. During Semester III, students obtain hands-on experience in the field, usually in a hospital setting. During Semester IV, students may choose to go to other settings which include long term care facilities, mental health facilities, social service agencies, rehabilitation facilities, cancer registries, physician offices and other related sites. The following are the current clinical practice experiences:

- Semester I - Ancillary professional practice experience observation as part of the Ancillary Records course - 8 hours
- Semester III - professional practice experience is scheduled 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. usually Tuesday for the entire semester - 120 hours.
- Semester IV professional practice experience is scheduled 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday for 3 weeks at the end of the semester - 120 hours.

Students are required to complete health requirements, obtain a background check and pay liability insurance before starting the program due to the requirements of the clinical sites/employers. **Students should be aware that due to clinical sites requiring background checks, information discovered may delay or prevent clinical education opportunities and entry into the profession.**

### **Will I Be Required To Travel?**

The sites utilized for clinical experiences are generally within a 75 mile radius of Stark State College. Students are responsible for travel and food expenses.

### **What Happens After Graduation?**

Following graduation, the HIT student is eligible to take the national certification examination of the American Health Information Management Association. Passing the exam signifies that the student has met nationally recognized entry-level competencies and is certified as a **Registered Health Information Technician - RHIT**. The examination is comprehensive, covering all aspects of health information and other subjects addressed in the curriculum. The exam is also computer-based and can be taken at over 100 sites nationally with results received immediately.

### **Continuing Education?**

Life long learning and keeping skills up-to-date are important in this field. In order for the RHIT to maintain their certification, they are required to obtain 20 clock hours of continuing education credit every two years.

For students interested in pursuing a Bachelor's degree, the HIT program has an articulation agreement with the University of Toledo. Graduates of the HIT program can take bridge classes at Stark State College and then complete the rest of the HIA degree online. The University of Cincinnati also offers an HIA program to HIT graduates, which is entirely online. Ohio State University offers a traditional HIA bachelor's degree. The student should contact the Bachelor degree program for more information

### **Is The HIMT Program Accredited?**

The Health Information Management Technology program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM).

### **How Can I Get More Information?**

You must make an appointment to meet with someone from the program to discuss the curriculum, program requirements and course schedule. Contact: Darlene S. Horn, RHIA, Department Chair at [dhorn@starkstate.edu](mailto:dhorn@starkstate.edu) or Judy Edgar, RHIA, Clinical Coordinator/Assistant Professor at [jedgar@starkstate.edu](mailto:jedgar@starkstate.edu) or you can call 330-966-5458 ext. 4296 for Darlene or 4213 for Judy.

Also visit the following websites for additional information about this exciting career:

- **American Health Information Management Association**  
[www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org)
- **Ohio Health Information Management Association**  
[www.ohima.org](http://www.ohima.org)
- **Occupational Outlook Handbook - Look under Professional and Related Occupations and look for Medical Records/Health Information**
- [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)