

# Certification – the recognized mark of a professional

By Margaret Dragon

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Why go through the preparation and process of becoming certified? Why do so many employers prefer certification when hiring Compliance department staff? What value does certification hold for the compliance and ethics professional? *Compliance Today* asked a number of compliance and ethics professionals these and other questions about compliance and ethics certification, and here are the results.

## Employers take notice

It is common knowledge that certification indicates a certain level of competency in a specific profession, so it is no surprise that, more and more, compliance certification is becoming preferred or even required. According to Compliance Certification Board (CCB) President Debbie Troklus, CHC-F “Employers believe compliance and ethics professionals, who have taken the time to obtain certification, demonstrate a high level of knowledge in the field and dedication to the profession.”

Professional certification provides employers with “assurance of competency and also demonstrates a personal commitment to excellence,” explains Rita Scichilone, MHSA, RHIA, CCS, CCS-P, CHC-F, Director, Practice Leadership with the American Health Information Management Association.

With an increasingly competitive workforce, employers can and are requiring professional credentials, explains Scichilone. “Some employers may widen their search by listing a compliance position as CHC [Certified in Healthcare Compliance] or CCEP [Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional] preferred, since it can be a negotiation factor for the right individual,” said Scichilone. “Compliance certification lends credibility to the candidate,” adds Troklus.

Compliance and ethics professional Shawn DeGroot, CHC-F, CCEP, Vice President of Corporate Responsibility for Regional Health in Rapid City, South Dakota points out that during her interview with Regional Health Board of Directors, the compliance credential “relayed the point that I was personally and professionally motivated to continue to learn and improve.” DeGroot says that she requires compliance certification for the Director position [at Regional Health] or [requires] that he/she “attain the credential within two years.”

## Survey confirms trend

Recent survey results agree with Scichilone and DeGroot. According to a national survey conducted by the Health Care Compliance Association (HCCA) in 2008, the compliance certification requirement has steadily increased since it first began tracking this information in 2006. For example, the 2008 survey indicated that 21% of the respondents require Assistant Compliance Officers be CHC, up from 17% in 2006; during that same time, the certification requirement for Compliance Generalists increased by 7%.

The survey also indicates a 6% increase for the compliance certification requirement for attorneys. (Survey results are available on the HCCA website at [www.hcca-info.org](http://www.hcca-info.org) under the “Compliance Info” tab).

John Falcetano, CCEP, CHC, CHC-F, CHRC, CIA, Chief Audit & Compliance Officer for the University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina, says he prefers certification when hiring Compliance department staff. “I have worked with my staff and encourage them to become certified. In fact, one of my staff just completed the Research Academy in June 2008 and became Certified in Healthcare Research Compliance (CHRC).”

## Heightened credibility

Employers are hiring certified compliance and ethics professionals. “The credential provides increased credibility in the industry on both the individual and organizational levels,” says Robert Lesser, Deputy Director, McHenry County Mental Health Board, in Crystal Lake, Illinois... “Having a credentialed staff demonstrates that both the individual and the organization are committed to ensuring that they will be meeting the required standards, whether they related to financial, clinical, legal, or licensure requirements,” he added.

Lesser suggests that having a certified compliance officer “facilitates confidence in the minds of monitoring entities. The regulators who monitor know that their monitoring activities will likely occur with greater ease, because of the increased likelihood of finding record keeping performed in a manner that facilitates easier review and accuracy.”

Compliance certification is a job requirement and it “was a factor in the decision to interview me for the job,” said Danna Teicheira, CHC, CCEP, Compliance Specialist/Privacy

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Officer with Southcentral Foundation, in Anchorage, Alaska. “My organization will fund the continuing education required to maintain the required certification,” adds Teicheira.

Bill Hensley, CCEP, Principle Corporate Compliance Specialist, Office of Ethics & Compliance with Medtronic, Inc. in Minneapolis is not the hiring manager for the Ethics and Compliance team, but he points out that a candidate “with a CCEP would certainly have an advantage from my perspective.” Falcetano adds, “Hiring qualified compliance professionals is a concern of many organizations. Being certified in your profession not only increases your credibility within your organization, but also with your peers.”

**Value of compliance certification**

Compliance and ethics professionals find

personal and professional value in becoming compliance and ethics certified. “Credentials from reputable sources garner respect, from the industry at large and within organizations,” says Scichilone. Teicheira agrees. “Certainly certification has enhanced my

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– Danna Teicheira**

job skills and expanded my knowledge of compliance. To be clear, I would say that the education and training that I received

and continue to receive in order to earn and maintain certification helps me every day,” says Teicheira.

Professional certification brings credibility and helps edge out the competition. “Competition in the workforce is a way of life, and obtaining a professional certification helps me demonstrate my commitment to the profession. I would say certification is an investment in my career,” explains Falcetano.

Cheryl Wagonhurst, JD, CCEP, Partner in the Los Angeles office of Foley and Lardner says that the “CCEP helps me in developing myself as an expert in the compliance field...It lends credibility to me as a compliance professional.” Wagonhurst adds that “anyone working in the compliance profession should become certified. It helps in establishing compliance as a profession.”

<p><b>Glossary of Certification Acronyms</b></p> <p><b>CCB – Compliance Certification Board.</b> (The independent CCB is governed by a board of directors appointed by the HCCA board. The President and Immediate Past President of HCCA are ex-officio members of the CCB Board of Directors. The mission of the CCB is to develop criteria for the determination of competence in the practice of health care compliance at a variety of levels and to recognize individuals who meet these criteria.)</p>	<p><b>Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics (SCCE).</b> For more information, visit the Website at <a href="http://www.corporatecompliance.org">www.corporatecompliance.org</a>.</p> <p><b>CHC – Certified in Healthcare Compliance</b></p> <p><b>CHC-F – Certified in Healthcare Compliance – Fellowship</b></p> <p><b>CHRC - Certified in Healthcare Research Compliance</b></p>	<p><b>CCS - Certified Coding Specialist</b></p> <p><b>CCS-P - Certified Coding Specialist--Physician-based</b></p> <p><b>RHIA - Registered Health Information Administrator</b></p> <p><b>American Health Information Management Association.</b> For more information, visit the Website at <a href="http://www.ahima.org">www.ahima.org</a>.</p>
<p><b>CCEP – Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional</b></p>	<p><b>Health Care Compliance Association (HCCA).</b> For more information, visit the Website at <a href="http://www.hcca-info.org">www.hcca-info.org</a>.</p>	<p><b>CIA® - The Certified Internal Auditor®</b> Institute of Internal Auditors. For more information, visit the Website at <a href="http://www.theiaa.org">www.theiaa.org</a>.</p>

“I am a compliance professional and proud of it,” adds Teicheira. She says that at a recent conference she attended, a U.S. Attorney applauded HCCA’s Code of Ethics. “Such praise reminds me why I have chosen to work in compliance. I consider compliance professionals walking, talking insurance policies for an organization. SCCE [Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics] and HCCA help to ensure we meet our obligations, never losing sight of the fact that at the end of the day, it’s all about doing the right thing.” ■

*To learn more about compliance certification options, including CCEP, CHC, CHC-F, and CHRC, please contact Liz Hergert by e-mail at [liz.bergert@corporatecompliance.org](mailto:liz.bergert@corporatecompliance.org) or visit [www.corporatecompliance.org](http://www.corporatecompliance.org) or [www.hcca-info.org](http://www.hcca-info.org)*

## Be Sure to Get Your CHC CEUs

Inserted in this issue of **Compliance Today** is a quiz related to the articles:

■ **The 1-2-3s of claims sampling to resolve overpayment errors** —

By B. Bo Martin, page 32

■ **Quality of care and compliance: Existing challenges and first steps for hospitals** —

By Cheryl L. Wagonhurst and Nathaniel M. Lactman, page 46

■ **Complying with the HIPAA Privacy Rule: What you need to know** —

By Rebecca C. Fayed, page 59

To obtain your CEUs, take the quiz and print your name at the top of the form. Fax it to Liz Hergert at 952/988-0146, or mail it to Liz’s attention at HCCA, 6500 Barrie Road, Suite 250, Minneapolis, MN 55435. Questions? Please call Liz Hergert at 888/580-8373.

### CHC Fellowship

On May 1, 2008 HCCA introduced Certified in Healthcare Compliance Fellowship (CHC-F), an advanced level of certification.

The purpose of the fellowship level of certification is to promote the profession of healthcare compliance practice by:

1. Formally recognizing health care compliance professionals who demonstrate an advanced knowledge of health care compliance.
2. Encouraging continued personal and professional growth in the practice of health care compliance, and
3. Providing a national standard of requisite knowledge required for advanced certification; thereby assisting employers, the public, and members of the health professions in the assessment of a health care compliance professional.

For a candidate to begin the fellowship process, an application (which demonstrates that all requirements are met) must be completed. “Candidates should keep in mind that this is an advanced credential and it has many requirements,” said Debbie Troklus, Compliance Certification Board President.

Requirements to apply for CHC-Fellowship

1. Maintain the CHC credential for a minimum of three years (can be non-consecutive years);
2. Certificates of credit documenting 40 hours of CCB CEUs within the two years preceding application with 20 hours within the 12 months preceding application;
3. Three references
  - No immediate family members
  - One character reference
  - One reference from an HCCA member who is also a CHC

4. One reference from your current immediate supervisor;
4. HCCA membership for at least three years preceding application (these need not be consecutive years);
5. A written statement that details knowledge and experience in the operation of all necessary elements of an effective compliance program;
6. Minimum of a bachelor’s degree verified by a certified transcript;
7. At least five years experience as a health care compliance professional;
8. Detailed written description of the Fellowship project proposal for approval by the CCB Fellowship Certification Board;
9. A completed authorization form allowing the CCB Certification Board to complete a background check including a criminal background check; and
10. Submission of \$150.00 non-refundable application fee

PLEASE NOTE: An application to CHC-F will require approval of the CCB Fellowship Certification Panel. Prior to approval of the application, an in-person screening interview with the CCB Fellowship Certification Panel may be required.

Your application will not be reviewed until all required forms and documents are received by the CCB Fellowship Certification Board.

After the candidate’s application for fellowship status has been accepted, the first step is the successful completion of a simulation examination.

For further information, please contact Liz Hergert, Certification Coordinator for SCCE/HCCA, at 952/405-7905.