



HEALTH INFORMATION CAREERS

Coding Program CCA Pathway

Quick Facts:

Goal: Get the basic training and certification needed to start a career in coding

Time needed to complete path: One year or less

Average salary: \$36,893 in 2008

What is a CCA?

The Certified Coding Associate (CCA) credential distinguishes coders by exhibiting commitment and demonstrating coding competencies across all settings, including both hospitals and physician practices. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates a shortage of more than 50,000 qualified HIM and HIT workers by 2015. Becoming a CCA positions you as a leader in an exciting and growing market. CCAs:

- Exhibit a level of commitment, competency, and professional capability that employers are looking for
- Demonstrate a commitment to the coding profession
- Distinguish themselves from non-credentialed coders and those holding credentials from organizations less demanding of the higher level of expertise required to earn AHIMA certification

What education will I need?

In addition to the recommended [AHIMA-approved coding program](#), CCA examination candidates must have a high school diploma from a United States high school or an equivalent educational background. Although not required, it is strongly recommended that candidates have at least six months experience in a healthcare organization applying ICD-9-CM and CPT coding conventions and guidelines, or have completed an [AHIMA-approved coding program](#), or have completed another formal coding training program.

Once I complete my coding education, what's the next step?

You can take a national credentialing exam to get your CCA credential. [Learn more](#) about the exam.

Where can I work once I'm a CCA?

Although most CCAs work in hospitals, they are also found in other healthcare settings including office-based physician practices, nursing homes, home health agencies, mental health facilities, and public health agencies.

Employment is expected to grow much faster than the average. Job prospects should be very good; technicians with a strong understanding of technology and computer software will be in particularly high demand.

Employment of medical records and health information technicians is expected to increase by 20 percent, much faster than the average for all occupations through 2018. Employment growth will result from the increase in the number of medical tests, treatments, and procedures that will be performed. As the population continues to age, the occurrence of health-related problems will increase. Cancer registrars should experience job growth as the incidence of cancer increases from an aging population.

In addition, with the increasing use of electronic health records, more technicians will be needed to complete the new responsibilities associated with electronic data management.

Job prospects should be very good. In addition to job growth, numerous openings will result from the need to replace medical record and health information technicians who retire or leave the occupation permanently. Technicians that demonstrate a strong understanding of technology and computer software will be in particularly high demand.

How can I further my career?

The [CCS and CCS-P](#) credentials demonstrate mastery level skills the CCA should strive for to advance his or her career. You could also consider:

- [Associate degree and RHIT credential](#)
- [Baccalaureate degree and RHIA credential](#)
- [Advanced certifications \(CHDA, CHPS\)](#)