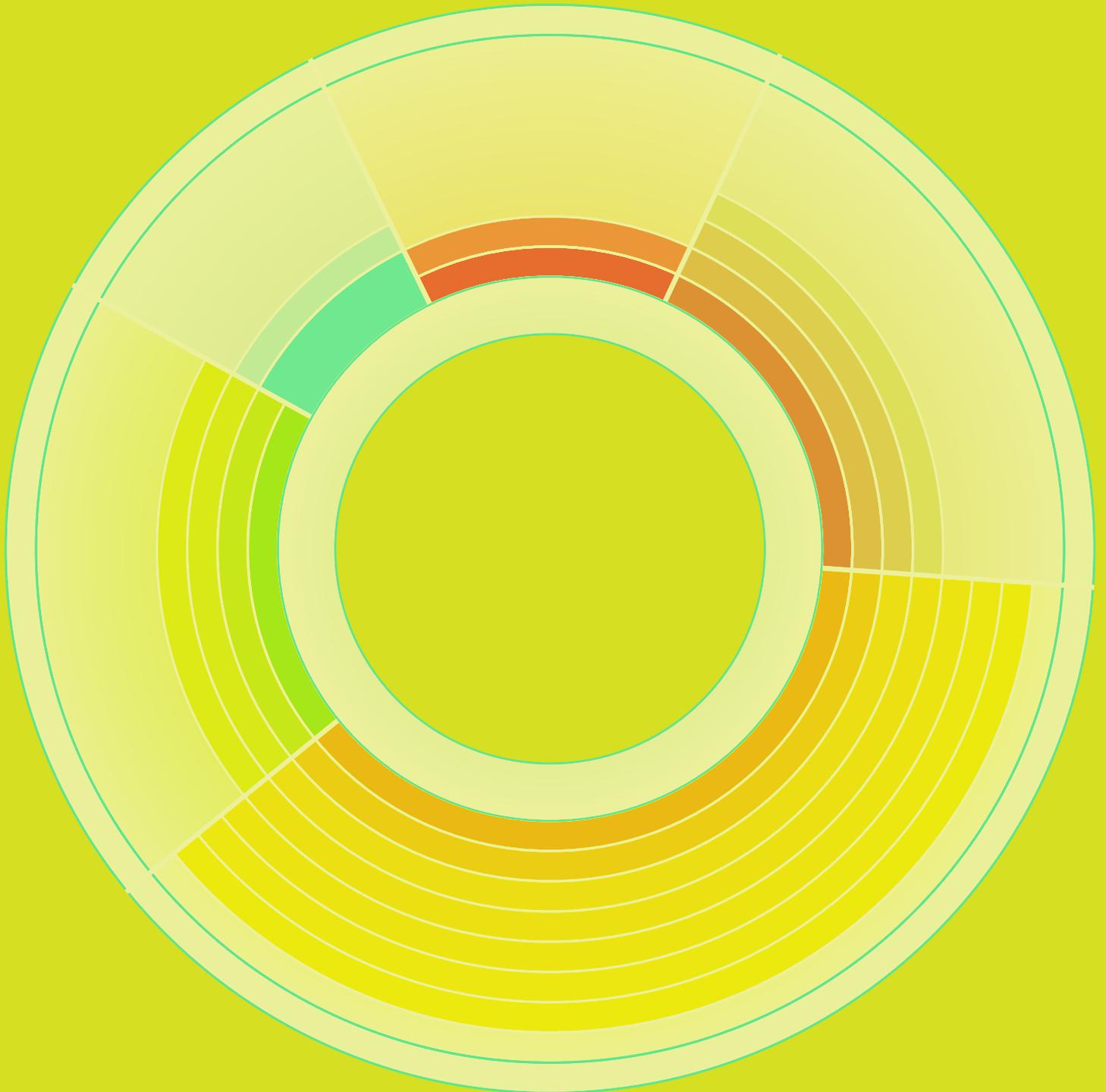# PLANNING YOUR CAREER IN
HEALTH INFORMATION

PLANNING YOUR CAREER IN
HEALTH INFORMATION

WHAT IS A CAREER IN HEALTH INFORMATION? People who work in this field manage the flow of data produced in the course of providing health care. They collect it, check it, organize, analyze and present it. They also protect information privacy and security.

There are jobs at all levels:

- **Entry-level administrative jobs in health care** can lead to jobs in health information management. These jobs require a high school diploma or equivalent. People in these jobs must have basic computer skills, know about health insurance and understand medical terminology.
- **Mid-level jobs** require a health information certification such as Certified Coding Associate (CCA), Certified Professional Coder (CPC), or Certified Coding Specialist (CCS). Some require an Associate Degree.
- **Mid-to-high level jobs** require an Associate Degree or a Bachelor's degree and two or more years of related experience. Employers strongly prefer certification such as Registered Health Information Associate (RHIA) or Technician (RHIT).
- **High-level jobs** require a Bachelor's degree or higher, and a number of years of experience in the field. Also, most employers prefer a certification, such as the RHIA or RHIT.

To move up from one level to the next, you need certifications, work experience and more education.

WHERE DO PEOPLE IN HEALTH INFORMATION WORK?

Entry-level administrative jobs are in just about every health care setting as well as in non-health care settings like insurance companies and government offices.

Most of mid-level and higher jobs are in hospitals. People can get their "foot in the door" in a hospital or large health care organization and then take advantage of opportunities for promotion from within.

HOW DOES THE FUTURE LOOK FOR HEALTH INFORMATION CAREERS?

In New York City, there are about 3,000 people working in entry-level health administrative jobs, with more than 100 openings each year. There are almost 4,000 people working in mid- and mid-to-high level jobs, with 160 openings each year. Every year there are more jobs advertised than in the year before. The field is constantly changing, as technology advances. The health information field is expected to grow in the next several years, as demand for health services increases.

WHO ENJOYS WORKING IN THE HEALTH INFORMATION FIELD?

A career in health information is good for people who:

- Want to work in health care, but not hands-on with patients.
- Are organized, very detail-oriented and like data.
- Are good at analyzing information and using logic.
- Like working with other people as part of a team.
- Can communicate with patients, co-workers, doctors, nurses and administrators on the job.
- Enjoy working with computers.
- Like learning, since the field is always changing.

HOW CAN I PREPARE TO WORK IN THE HEALTH INFORMATION FIELD?

If you are interested in this field, you should take classes to learn about it. The grid on the back of this brochure shows where you can find these classes in New York City. It shows CUNY colleges, SUNY colleges and community organizations that offer education and training for people who want to work in the health information field.

JOBS IN HEALTH INFORMATION

ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS

MEDICAL SECRETARY, also called **patient services representative** or **medical administrative assistant.** People in these jobs work directly with patients in a doctor's office or clinic. They gather health information and enter it into an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system.

PATIENT REGISTRAR, also called **unit service associate** or **admitting assistant**. These people work with patients in a hospital or nursing home. They gather health information for admitting patients and also make sure information gets to the Medical Records department when patients are discharged. They also help with other clerical duties.

HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (HIM) CLERK, also called **HIM Assistant**, **HIM Specialist** and **HIM Analyst**. These jobs are usually in the HIM department of a hospital. People in these jobs make sure medical records are complete and accurate.

MEDICAL BILLER, also called **Accounts Receivable Clerk**. These jobs could be in any type of health care facility. These people prepare health insurance claims or bills and do simple coding.

MID-LEVEL JOBS

OUTPATIENT CODER. These jobs are in clinics, Emergency Departments or doctors' offices. They usually require the CCA or CPC credential. People in these jobs are usually involved with billing.

HIM DOCUMENTATION TECHNICIAN, also called **Health Records Analyst** or **Medical Records Technician**. These people review patient records in hospitals and make sure they are complete and accurate. Employers prefer the RHIT certification.

CANCER REGISTRAR, also called **Tumor Registrar**. These jobs require the CTR certification, which involves both an Associate degree and experience.

INPATIENT CODER. These jobs are in hospitals. They are the most complicated coding jobs and usually require the CCS credential. There are more coding jobs in hospitals than in other types of health care facilities.

MID-TO-HIGH LEVEL JOBS

HIM SUPERVISOR. People in these jobs supervise HIM Clerks. They carry out the operations of the HIM Department in a hospital or large health care facility. They might report to the HIM Manager.

HIM MANAGER in a nursing home or clinic. These people manage the day-to-day operations of the Medical Records department, including supervising the staff. They are responsible for all privacy matters for the organization.

CLINICAL DOCUMENTATION IMPROVEMENT SPECIALIST. These people improve the quality and completeness of health information. They work with doctors, nurses and coders to make sure that the medical record accurately includes information about services provided. These jobs usually require at least 3-5 years of experience in a hospital.

DIAGNOSTIC RELATED GROUP (DRG) COORDINATOR, also called **DRG Reviewer** or **Coding Validator**. People in these jobs review the work of coders. They may be involved in audits. The job requires a CCS credential and at least five years of coding experience in a hospital. This is the most-advertised job in Health Information Management in New York City.

HIGH LEVEL JOBS

EHR IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST. People in these jobs make sure staff are trained to use EHR systems. They help to organize the flow of work using an EHR system.

DIRECTOR, HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (hospital or large health system). People in these jobs oversee the activities of the HIM department of a hospital. They organize the work and manage the staff. They work with all of the departments in a hospital and make sure government regulations are followed.

HEALTH INFORMATICS ANALYST OR SPECIALIST. People in these jobs analyze EHR data to help improve the quality of patient care.
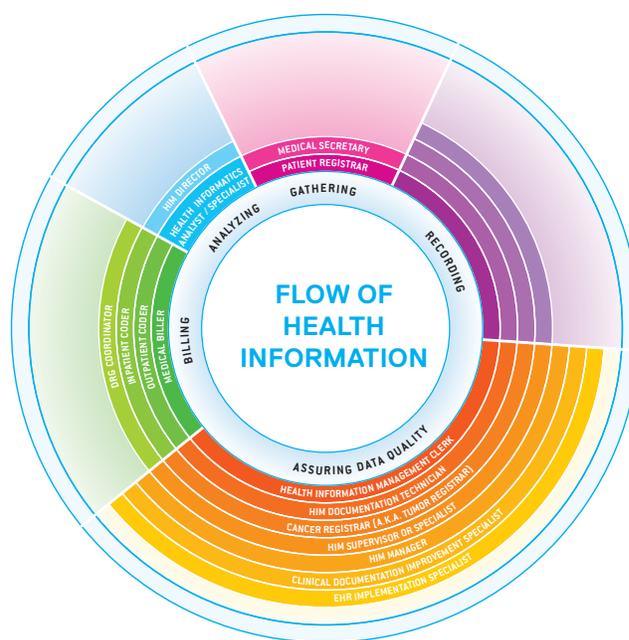
THE FLOW OF HEALTH INFORMATION

GATHERING: When people visit doctors, clinics or hospitals, they give health information about themselves. This may be on paper forms, verbally or through computer applications. This information is gathered and is usually entered into an Electronic Health Record (EHR) and/or billing system.

RECORDING: When a doctor, nurse, home health aide or other health practitioner provides a service such as a physical exam or an x-ray, he or she records information about that service in the EHR. Information is kept about what services were provided, who provided them and where.

ASSURING DATA QUALITY: This is the heart of the health information management field. After services are provided, health information professionals make sure the information is complete and accurate. It is very important to collect, update and enter information about patients because this is used to track patients over time and link records from different sources.
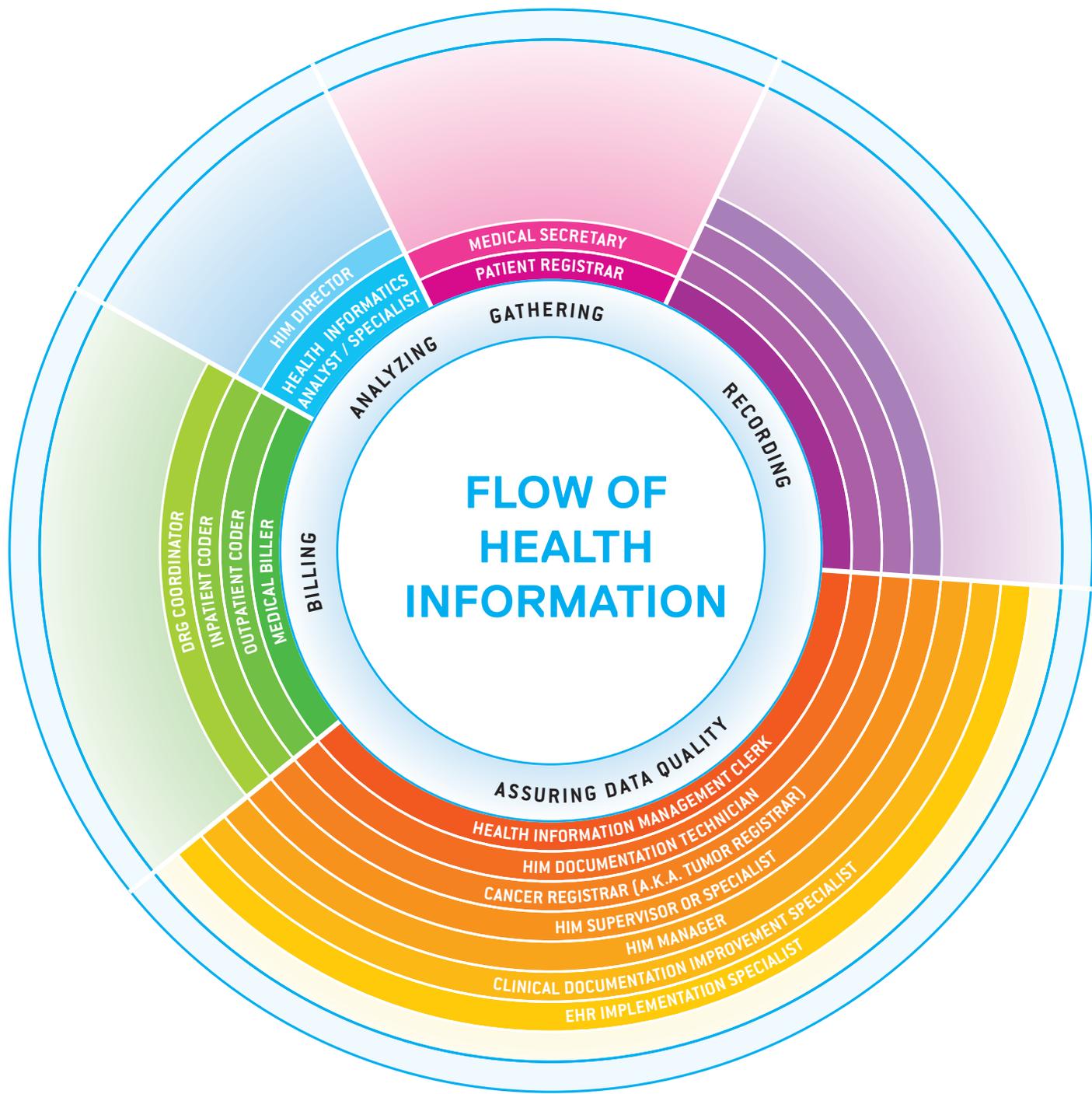
BILLING (REVENUE MANAGEMENT): After a person has received health care services, a bill is given to whoever is paying for the service – usually a health insurance company, Medicare or Medicaid, but sometimes the patients themselves. This is part of revenue management.

ANALYZING DATA: Health care organizations and public health officials analyze health information. They look at how people use health care services, how effective the care is, and how much it costs, among other things. Analysis is needed to make sure the health care system delivers high quality care.

Security and compliance are also important functions in health information. Health information professionals must be careful to protect patient records. Records must only be released in compliance with laws and regulations.

FLOW OF HEALTH INFORMATION

GATHERING
- MEDICAL SECRETARY
- PATIENT REGISTRAR

RECORDING

ASSURING DATA QUALITY
- HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CLERK
- HIM DOCUMENTATION TECHNICIAN
- CANCER REGISTRAR (A.K.A. TUMOR REGISTRAR)
- HIM SUPERVISOR OR SPECIALIST
- HIM MANAGER
- CLINICAL DOCUMENTATION IMPROVEMENT SPECIALIST
- EHR IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST

BILLING
- DRG COORDINATOR
- INPATIENT CODER
- OUTPATIENT CODER
- MEDICAL BILLER

ANALYZING
- HIM DIRECTOR
- HEALTH INFORMATICS ANALYST / SPECIALIST

THIS CHART SHOWS THE COMBINATION OF EDUCATION, CERTIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE TYPICALLY NEEDED TO QUALIFY FOR EACH POSITION.

	JOB TITLE	MINIMUM EDUCATION	CERTIFICATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	ESTIMATED SALARY RANGE*
ENTRY	MEDICAL SECRETARY	HIGH SCHOOL + TRAINING	NONE	0-1	$25K - $48K
ENTRY	PATIENT REGISTRAR	HIGH SCHOOL + TRAINING	NONE	0-1	$20K - $40K
ENTRY	HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (HIM) CLERK	HIGH SCHOOL + TRAINING	NONE	0-1	$25K - $60K
ENTRY	MEDICAL BILLER	HIGH SCHOOL + TRAINING	NONE	0-1	$25K - $50K
MID	OUTPATIENT CODER	HIGH SCHOOL	CCA OR CPC	1-2	$25K - $48K
MID	HIM DOCUMENTATION TECHNICIAN	ASSOCIATE	RHIT PREFERRED	1-2	$23K - $58K
MID	CANCER REGISTRAR	ASSOCIATE	CTR REQUIRED	2-3	$35K - $60K
MID	INPATIENT CODER	HIGH SCHOOL	CCS REQUIRED	2-3	$31K - $59K
MID-HIGH	HIM SUPERVISOR	ASSOCIATE	RHIT PREFERRED	2-3	$31K - $60K
MID-HIGH	HIM MANAGER	ASSOC. IN RELATED FIELD	RHIT PREFERRED	3-5	$40K - $79K
MID-HIGH	CLINICAL DOCUMENTATION IMPROVEMENT SPECIALIST	BACHELOR'S	CCS, CDIP SOMETIMES RN	3-5	$54K - $98K
MID-HIGH	DRG COORDINATOR	BACHELOR'S	CCS	5-10	$46K - $90K
HIGH	EHR IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST	BACHELOR'S	RHIA PREFERRED	3-5	$57K -$110K
HIGH	HEALTH INFORMATICS ANALYST OR SPECIALIST	BACHELOR'S/MASTER'S	RN OR RHIA	5-10	$66K - $120K
HIGH	HIM DIRECTOR	BACHELOR'S/MASTER'S	RHIA REQUIRED	7-10	$58K - $180K

HEALTH INFORMATION CERTIFICATIONS

MEDICAL CODING
- AHIMA's Certified Coding Associate (CCA) and AAPC's Certified Professional Coder (CPC) are entry-level certifications and are helpful in getting a job in a doctor's office, clinic or hospital Emergency Department.
- AHIMA's Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) is a more demanding certification that is needed to be an inpatient coder in a hospital. This is considered the "gold standard" coding credential.

HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
- AHIMA's Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) is required for most mid- to high-level jobs. It requires an Associate degree from a CAHIIM-accredited program and passing the RHIT exam.
- AHIMA's Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) is required for most high-level jobs. It requires a Bachelor's degree from a CAHIIM-accredited program and passing the RHIA exam.

The **CERTIFIED TUMOR REGISTRAR** credential is awarded by the National Cancer Registrars Association. It requires an Associate Degree. The amount of experience needed depends on the Associate Degree major.

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* Estimated salary ranges were supplied by Payscale.com and represent the bottom 10% to the top 10% of salaries in NYC for each position.

CAREER PATHS

There are many possible career paths in the health information field. People who start off in entry-level administrative jobs in health care may move into a career in **Health Information Management (HIM).**

There are three main types of career paths in **HIM**:

• **CAREERS IN CODING**, especially in hospitals. As people gain expertise, they can become very valuable. This is because coding must be correct so that health care providers collect the right amount of money for the services they have provided.
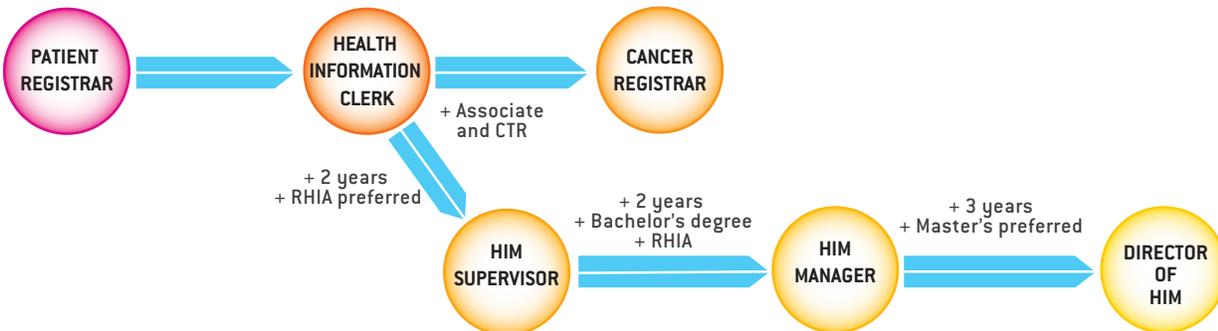
• **CAREERS IN OPERATIONS**, or managing medical records, including EHR systems. These jobs do not involve coding, but require knowledge of how health data is maintained and used.

• **CAREERS OUTSIDE OF THE HIM DEPARTMENT** or outside a health care provider. These may include jobs in an Electronic Health Records (EHR) company, in care management, compliance or data analytics, or in a hospital's IT department.

MEDICAL CODING REVENUE CYCLE CAREER PATH

MEDICAL BILLER → + CCS → INPATIENT CODER → + 5 years + Bachelor's preferred → DRG COORDINATOR

NON-CODING HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAREER PATH

PATIENT REGISTRAR → HEALTH INFORMATION CLERK → + Associate and CTR → CANCER REGISTRAR

HEALTH INFORMATION CLERK → + 2 years + RHIA preferred → HIM SUPERVISOR → + 2 years + Bachelor's degree + RHIA → HIM MANAGER → + 3 years + Master's preferred → DIRECTOR OF HIM

OUTPATIENT/ LONG-TERM CARE CAREER PATH

MEDICAL SECRETARY → + Associate +RHIT → HIM DOCUMENTATION TECHNICIAN → + 3 years → HIM MANAGER {in a clinic or nursing home}

WHERE THERE ARE COMPUTERS, THERE ARE IT JOBS!

In addition to jobs and careers in health information management, some IT professionals work in health care. There are three broad categories of jobs in **HEALTH IT: hardware, software and cyber-security.**

HARDWARE refers to the physical components of a computer. This includes computer networking. Many people enter this field in Help Desk or Desktop Support jobs. Most employers require a certification in network administration such as CompTIA A+ or Network+. Because people in these jobs help computer users to solve computer-related problems, customer service skills are also important.

SOFTWARE includes operating systems, applications and programs. Jobs in this category include web developers, applications and system software developers, and database developers. This is a large and growing category of jobs. People in this field usually know more than one programming language.

CYBER-SECURITY professionals protect computer networks and the information within them. Because these activities straddle both software and hardware, people in these jobs must know both.

The graphics to the right indicate typical education levels for these jobs, but a lot of Health IT is about showing that you know how to do the job and have experience.
People learn on the job and move to higher positions based on their experience and track record. Industry certifications can be important.
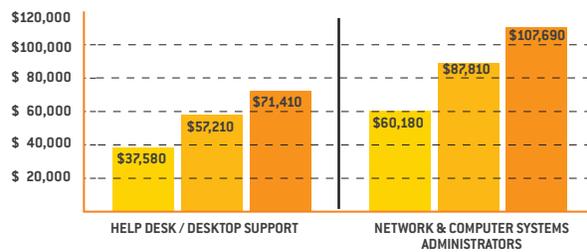
+ Growing faster than average for all jobs
++ Growing twice as fast as average
+++ Growing three times as fast as average

SOURCE: New York State Department of Labor. Estimates for average annual openings span occupational employment across all industries in NYC.
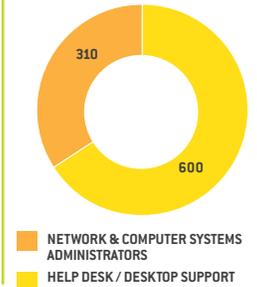
HARDWARE JOBS

- **HELP DESK/ DESKTOP SUPPORT +** Provide help and advice to people and organizations using computer software or equipment. TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Some college

- **NETWORK AND COMPUTER SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATORS ++**
These professionals are responsible for the day-to-day operation of computer networks, which are critical components of almost every organization.
TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Bachelor's degree

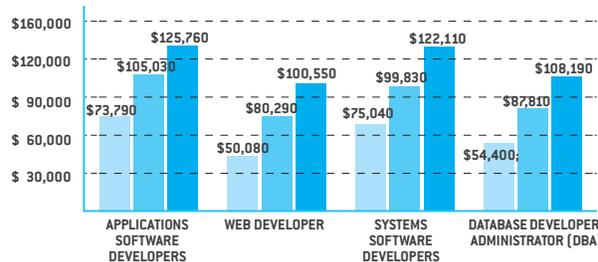**ANNUAL SALARIES FOR HARDWARE JOBS (2013)** Enrty Level Mid Level Experienced

Help Desk / Desktop Support: $37,580 (Entry), $57,210 (Mid), $71,410 (Experienced)
Network & Computer Systems Administrators: $60,180 (Entry), $87,810 (Mid), $107,690 (Experienced)

AVERAGE ANNUAL OPENINGS
- NETWORK & COMPUTER SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATORS: 310
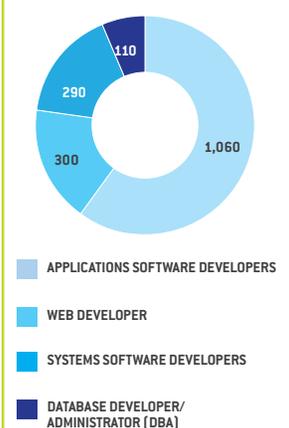- HELP DESK / DESKTOP SUPPORT: 600

SOFTWARE JOBS

- **APPLICATIONS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS++** Develop the applications that allow people to do specific tasks on a computer or other device. TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Bachelor's degree
- **WEB DEVELOPERS +** Primarily design and create websites, including patient portals, and some may also develop content for the website and/or monitor the website's performance. TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Associate degree
- **SYSTEMS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS +++** Develop the underlying systems that run the devices or control networks. TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Bachelor's degree
- **DATABASE DEVELOPERS/ ADMINISTRATOR (DBAs)++** Use specialized software to store and organize data and ensure such data are available to users and are secure from unauthorized access. TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Bachelor's degree plus 1-5 years' experience
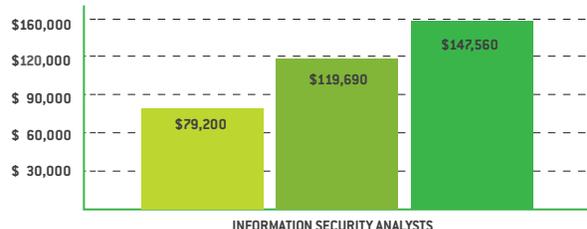
ANNUAL SALARIES FOR HARDWARE JOBS (2013) Enrty Level Mid Level Experienced

Applications Software Developers: $73,790 (Entry), $105,030 (Mid), $125,760 (Experienced)
Web Developer: $50,080 (Entry), $80,290 (Mid), $100,550 (Experienced)
Systems Software Developers: $75,040 (Entry), $99,830 (Mid), $122,110 (Experienced)
Database Developer/ Administrator (DBA): $54,400 (Entry), $87,810 (Mid), $108,190 (Experienced)

AVERAGE ANNUAL OPENINGS
- APPLICATIONS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS: 1,060
- WEB DEVELOPER: 300
- SYSTEMS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS: 290
- DATABASE DEVELOPER/ ADMINISTRATOR (DBA): 110

CYBER-SECURITY

- **INFORMATION SECURITY ANALYSTS +++** Carry out security measures to protect computer networks and systems.
TYPICAL ED LEVEL: Bachelor's degree with 1-5 years of experience

Information Security Analysts: $79,200 (Entry), $119,690 (Mid), $147,560 (Experienced)

ANNUAL SALARIES FOR CYBER SECURITY (2013) Enrty Level Mid Level Experienced

AVERAGE ANNUAL OPENINGS: 90

WHAT PROGRAMS PREPARE PEOPLE FOR THE JOBS ON THIS CAREER MAP?

KEY
- 🟩 BILLING
- 🟨 ASSURING: ENTRY-MID
- 🟪 GATHERING
- 🟧 ASSURING: MID-HIGH
- 🟦 ANALYZING
- ⬛ INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

	JOB TRAINING/CONTINUING EDUCATION			HEALTH INFORMATION MGMT			COMPUTER SCIENCE/TECH/INFO SYSTEMS		
	MED. BILLING & CODING	H.I.M. & E.H.R.	MED SEC'Y/OFFICE ADMIN.	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S	MASTER'S	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S	MASTER'S
MANHATTAN									
BARUCH COLLEGE								IT	
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid		Assuring: Mid-High			IT		
CITY COLLEGE	Billing							IT	IT
GUTTMAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE							IT		
HUNTER COLLEGE	Billing							IT	
JOHN JAY COLLEGE								IT	
SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES	Billing				Assuring: Mid-High			IT	IT
GRACE INSTITUTE			Gathering						
MANHATTAN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER		Assuring: Entry-Mid							
STRIVE NEW YORK			Gathering						
QUEENS									
LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing						IT		
QUEENS COLLEGE	Billing							IT	
QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid	Gathering				IT		
YORK COLLEGE	Billing								
BROOKLYN									
BROOKLYN COLLEGE						Analyzing		IT	
KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid					IT		
MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE	Billing						IT	IT	
NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid					IT	IT	
OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW			Gathering						
SUNY BROOKLYN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER	Billing		Gathering						
SUNY DOWNSTATE						Analyzing			
BRONX									
BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid	Gathering				IT		
HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Billing								
LEHMAN COLLEGE	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid						IT	
SI									
COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND	Billing	Assuring: Entry-Mid					IT	IT	

NOTE: THIS TABLE IS ACCURATE FOR THE 2014 – 2015 ACADEMIC YEAR. PLEASE CONSULT INDIVIDUAL WEBSITES TO EXPLORE CURRENT LISTINGS.

STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

JOB TRAINING/CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Medical Billing and Coding: Hunter, Queens, Medgar Evers, NYC College of Technology and Lehman prepare students for the CCA and CPC certification exams.
- Medical Secretary/Office Administration: Queensborough's Medical Office Administration includes three credits that can be applied towards the HIM Bachelor's degree at the CUNY School of Professional Studies (SPS).

HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (HIM)

- Associate degree program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC): prepares students for the RHIT certification exam. This program is accredited by CAHIIM.
- Bachelor's degree program at CUNY SPS: prepares students for the RHIA certification exam. This program is accredited by CAHIIM.

- All credits from BMCC's Associate degree program can be applied to the CUNY SPS Bachelor's degree program.
- CCS certification can potentially be worth 18 credits.
- CCA or CPC certification can potentially be worth 3 credits.
- All 36 credits from the CUNY SPS coding program can be applied to the CUNY SPS Bachelor's degree program.

Use these websites to learn more about health information jobs:
- American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), **www.ahima.org**
- AHIMA New York City Chapter, **www.himanyc.org**
- American Academy of Professional Coders, **www.aapc.com**

- Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS), **www.himss.org**
- New York Health Careers, **www.healthcareersinfo.net**
- National Cancer Registrar's Association (NCRA), **www.ncra-usa.org**

- National Healthcareer Association, **www.nhanow.com**
- Commission on Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management Education, **www.cahiim.org**