

Case Study X. Management/Leadership

A clinical employee is assigned to the HIM department due to his reassignment to “light duty” because of a work-related injury. The HIM director is struggling to find the right fit for assignments within the HIM department. One of the supervisors, who serves as the local HIM association’s secretary, has a database of all credentialed members and nonmembers. She needs mailing labels prepared to send out a ballot for the Association. She decides that the aforementioned employee can prepare the labels, address the envelopes, and make notes of the contact information for those who happen to meet minimum education and certification requirements for one of their vacancies. Is there an ethical violation, dilemma, or concern?

In this scenario, there is an ethical concern. Most likely this would be an ethical concern unless the culture of the organization and its support of staff professional involvement and community outreach would encompass the use of internal resources. However, this would definitely have to be verified with the current senior leadership.

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

By asking the employee to perform these duties for the HIM supervisor while working on behalf of the organization results in personal gain for the supervisor (since it is assumed the supervisor would have had to complete the duties on his or her time). To reiterate, this would definitely have to be verified with the current senior leadership.

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

The principles and guidelines this member possibly violated include:

Principle 2. Put service and the health and welfare of persons before self-interest and conduct themselves in the practice of the profession so as to bring honor to themselves, their peers, and to the health information management profession.

Principle 4. Refuse to participate in or conceal unethical practices or procedures and report such practices.

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 8. Represent the profession to the public in a positive manner.

Principle 10. Perform honorably health information management association responsibilities, either appointed or elected, and preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information made known in any official capacity.

To reiterate, this would definitely have to be verified with the current senior leadership.

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

The Act could be seen as endorsed by the CSA/AHIMA and reflect poorly on the professional organization(s), the membership, and the credentialed HIM supervisor.

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

It is assumed this is an established AHIMA member serving in a CSA board position and should be aware of the AHIMA Code of Ethics. Thus, the supervisor should be familiar with the current organization's policy.

Resolution: After approaching senior leadership and discovering that resources may not be used for outside activities, it is a reportable incident.