

## Special Audio Report Transcript

Headline: Private Sector Steps Up With Training, Efforts To Boost U.S. Health Care IT Workforce

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I'm Kelly Wilkinson with a look at how private-sector groups are boosting health IT training efforts. This is a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service from the California HealthCare Foundation.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that up to 50,000 new health IT professionals are needed to help health care providers meet meaningful use criteria and make the shift to electronic health records. The federal government has invested millions of dollars to develop a skilled workforce and set up its own training programs. But private-sector organizations also are working to boost the field of health care professionals.

***(Figge): "Business is all about getting to the bottom line, but it's the workforce that gets you there."***

Helen Figge is senior director of career services for Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, or HIMSS. The not-for-profit focuses on improving the quality and access to health care through IT.

***(Figge): "Today we're seeing people in career transitions and a shift into health care and health information technology career tracks like never before. So there's no better time to invest in the workforce than now because health information technology careers are evolving."***

Because of that evolution, Figge says HIMSS offers a range of professional development services.

***(Figge): "We have access to academic institutions, mentoring career programs, emerging professional support, job services, which is powered by a job board that HIMSS owns, and virtual career fairs we're setting up for those to have access to health workforce opportunities."***

AHIMA -- the American Health Information Management Association -- recently announced its own initiative. "HIM Jobs for America" will support training and employment for health IT professionals. Bill Rudman is executive

director of the AHIMA Foundation and vice president of education and visioning.

***(Rudman): "We're really looking to create a model that is both sustainable and also a model that will reach to the American patients and population that need it the most. Which is our individuals in underserved and poor areas."***

To that end, the initiative will provide free training to health care providers in underserved areas. HHS and North Shore Medical Labs will donate electronic health record systems. Rudman says that should help bridge a critical gap for small practices until they qualify for incentive payments by meeting meaningful use standards. He says the public-private partnership makes the initiative more sustainable than government programs, many of which have a finite period of funding.

***(Rudman): "So they might allocate for like 5 years. So after that five years is up, basically the funding goes away, the program goes away. And, so what we've tried to do in this particular instance is to create a public-private initiative, where we have people from the educational or academic field, the private sector, the association sector and the government come together to develop a program or plan that will be not dependent on just government funding."***

"HIM Jobs for America" also includes a legislative platform urging lawmakers to include health IT training as part of President Obama's Jobs Act.

There are the job postings to show an increasing demand for health IT workers. Dice.com is a website for technology positions. Managing Director Alice Hill says the company measures job postings year over year, and month to month.

***(Hill): "And what we found in terms of health care IT is that our job postings are up 18% compared to this time last year."***

Hill says as the field of health care IT is becoming increasingly specialized. Salaries are also increasing -- they're 7% higher than this time last year. All of which, she says, shows opportunity.

***(Hill): "You think about health care it's an area that has really lagged in terms of having a sophisticated digital system of maintaining records and across different systems, talking to one another. All of that is more in demand than ever and changing very quickly as we're starting to really digitize our health care industries."***

Because the health care field is evolving, HIMSS' Helen Figge says that underscores the need for robust training to give potential workers the information necessary to navigate the new landscape.

***(Figge): "Really having access to the information that one needs to empower themselves, to understand the landscape of what is going on with the Office of the National Coordinator, where trends are, where we're going, where we need to be."***

This has been a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service from the California HealthCare Foundation. If you have feedback or other issues you'd like to have addressed, please email us at [ihb@chcf.org](mailto:ihb@chcf.org). I'm Kelly Wilkinson. Thanks for listening.