

2022 NPCR ILLINOIS SUCCESS STORY

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Bridging the Gap: Building Certified Tumor Registrars

National Program of Cancer Registries SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY

The Illinois State Cancer Registry (ISCR) developed a successful training program to create Certified Tumor Registrars (CTRs).

CHALLENGE

ISCR staff retirements led to a deficit of central registry staff. Central registry CTR positions were posted with competitive salaries and benefits but received no applicants. With CTRs in short supply, ISCR developed a plan to cultivate new cancer registry professionals.

SOLUTION

ISCR identified a trainer within existing staff who had both hospital and central registry experience, and a comprehensive training plan was developed utilizing existing resources and one-on-one instruction. Candidates were selected based on qualifications (Bachelor's or other healthcare degree minimum) and agreed to enroll in the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) accredited AHIMA Cancer Registry Management Program (CRM). Pre-requisites not previously met were completed through AHIMA.

Training was divided into several areas – basic knowledge, foundational concepts, and case finding, coding, and abstracting. The trainer was able to assess basic knowledge of anatomy and physiology and medical terminology using SEER*Educate General Knowledge tests. Resources were provided for additional training, when necessary.

Foundational concepts such as data flow, standard setters and roles, data analysis, and registry operations were reviewed in depth with the trainer and reinforced with reading material including *Cancer Registry Management, Principles and Practice, Third Edition* and SEER*Educate quizzes, when available.

Case finding, abstracting, and coding principles were introduced via reading material including *SEER*Train* and webinars available through standard setters and ISCR's learning management site, Fundamental Learning Collaborative for the Cancer Surveillance Community (FLccSC). These activities were supplemented by frequent lecture and discussion time with the trainer to reinforce this learning. SEER*Educate and other quizzes were employed to emphasize the proper utilization of manuals and resources. Exercises in SEER*Educate were completed both alongside the trainer and individually. Students had consistent direct access to the trainer to optimize success as they moved through the training program.

The AHIMA CRM Program was completed concurrently throughout this time. Using the NCRA Accredited Formal Education Program Practicum Guide, a practicum experience was developed, and the practicum period began following completion of ISCR's training program and AHIMA coursework. Candidates travelled to a nearby hospital to complete hospital-specific portions of the 160-hour practicum (i.e., items which could not be observed in the central registry environment, such as Cancer Conference, Cancer Committee, etc.). Practicum was supervised by the ISCR trainer.

RESULTS

The first group of candidates began in early 2019. Between January of 2019 and July of 2022, a total of eight candidates satisfactorily completed ISCR's comprehensive training program, AHIMA's Cancer Registry Management Program, and the required 160-hour practicum. Eligibility route A-1 was utilized for all candidates taking the CTR exam.

The first two candidates in the program sat for the CTR exam in Summer 2019 (one pass/one fail), two candidates in Fall 2020 (both passed), one candidate in Fall 2021 (passed), one candidate in Spring 2022 (passed), and the final two included in this story sat for the exam in Summer 2022, both passing. To date, seven of eight candidates (87.5%) have successfully completed ISCR's training program and obtained the CTR credential on first attempt compared nationally to 72% of first-time test-takers in 2021¹. The mean passing CTR exam score for the seven candidates was 85.63% and median was 89.44%. At the time of this story, five candidates have successfully applied and been hired for a cancer registrar position at ISCR.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

All candidates completing the comprehensive training program are surveyed to evaluate both the training program and practicum experience, individually. Improvements have been made to the program over time, and the program continues to be revised as standard setter resource updates are introduced.

STORY QUOTE

"ISCR's training program was invaluable to me. The many online resources may provide the basic information needed to become a CTR, but the personal training and one-to-one instruction and tutoring is what brought it all together, allowed it to make sense in context, and made it possible for me to pass the exam." – Bob Meyer, CTR

REGISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

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[Illinois State Cancer Registry Website](#)



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

REFERENCES

National Cancer Registrars Association Council on Certification. (2022, March 04). CTR Exam 2021 Report. NCRA. <https://www.ncra-usa.org/Portals/68/PDFs/CertificationPDFs/CTRExam2021report.pdf>