

Policy Issue 5: HIT Workforce and Skills

Selecting, adopting and maintaining HIT requires technical support and skills in a variety of levels. Information technology professionals with a competent understanding of health care provision are needed as independent consultants in planning, product selection, oversight of installation and adoption, and assistance with on-going problem-solving and system revisions/upgrades. Health care support personnel, such as medical records, billing, nursing and allied health, need baseline and continuing education in operating IT systems. Health care providers need training in use of the system for information entry, transfer and access, as well as in utilization of system reports to improve quality of care. Skills and expertise in each of these areas must be developed both as a baseline and as continuing upgrades.

- 5.1 Colleges and universities that train computer and IT systems personnel should develop expanded curriculums in health systems applications. Such curriculums could be designed in collaboration with the educational institution's health sciences or health professions programs and/or local health care provider systems.
- 5.2 Community colleges and technical schools should develop collaborative training programs between computer sciences and medical records or nursing. Alternatively, nursing and allied health curriculums should add coursework and labs in computer systems relevant to patient care information and communication systems.
- 5.3 Regional Health Information Organizations (RHIOs) should include a technical consultation function to:
 - 5.3.1 Guide providers in the region in selection of HIT systems,
 - 5.3.2 To provide a supplemental technical support system for operational issues,
 - 5.3.3 To provide continuing training for health providers and support staff, and
 - 5.3.4 To assist with HIT technical staff recruitment.
- 5.4 Health provider training programs should include curriculum components on HIT, including practical steps in selection of systems, products and personnel needed to operate systems and the application of HIT information in quality monitoring and improvement.