HIMAA Clinical Documentation Specialist Position Statement

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HIMAA recognises Clinical Documentation Specialists (CDSs) as health professionals specialising in clinical documentation integrity.

Working with clinicians, Health Information Managers, Clinical Coders and other stakeholders, CDSs perform a critical role in supporting patient safety[1] and continuity of care, accurate clinical coding, reliable health data and appropriate funding, planning, research and health system decision-making .

HIMAA supports the recognition, professionalisation and continued development of the CDS workforce through clearly defined HIMAA CDS Competency and Capability Standards, appropriate education, training and professional development and recognised pathways into CDS practice.

HIMAA affirms that CDSs:

- **Contribute to safe, high-quality continuity of care.** By supporting accurate, complete and clinically meaningful documentation, CDSs strengthen communication, support informed clinical decision-making and continuity of care, and help minimise risks associated with incomplete, unclear or inaccurate documentation.
- **Strengthen the integrity and reliability of health information.** By improving the accuracy, completeness and clinical meaning of source documentation to ensure it reflects the clinical truth, CDSs support the integrity of coded and reported data for safety and quality monitoring, funding, service planning, organisational performance, research and health system decision-making.
- **Enhance collaboration across clinical, coding, health information, quality and corporate functions.** CDSs act as facilitators and liaisons, building shared understanding and supporting sustainable improvements in documentation practice.
- **Educate clinicians on clinical documentation standards.** This includes documentation clarity, completeness and specificity, relevant regulatory, quality and safety requirements; and the impact of documentation on clinical coding, health data and funding outcomes.
- **Maintain contemporary knowledge and undertake ongoing professional development.** Continuous learning ensures CDS practice reflects current clinical knowledge, documentation and classification standards, regulatory and accreditation requirements and relevant emerging technologies.

Recognised pathways into CDS practice

CDSs enter the practice with relevant qualifications, professional experience and develop the knowledge and demonstrated competence required for CDS practice. HIMAA recognises that entry into CDS practice may occur through one or more of the following pathways:

- **Clinical coding:** a qualification in clinical coding supported by relevant professional experience.
- **Health information management:** a recognised tertiary qualification in health information management supported by relevant professional experience.
- **Health professional:** a recognised tertiary qualification in medicine, nursing or an allied health discipline supported by relevant professional experience.

As Australia's digital health capability advances, the need for trustworthy, context-rich clinical information continues to grow. CDSs bridge clinical practice and health information management, helping to ensure documentation remains accurate, clinically relevant and aligned with coding, regulatory and documentation standards. In doing so, they support safer, more transparent and data-informed health care.

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[1] Davis, J., & Shepheard, J. (2024). Clinical documentation integrity: Its role in health data integrity, patient safety and quality outcomes and its impact on clinical coding and health information management. Health Information Management Journal, 53(2), 53–60. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/18333583231218029

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