

BULLETIN

Health Information Management consolidation: arbitrators decisions disappoint

August 4, 2011

HSA reported on July 8, 2011 that the union and the employer had decided to ask arbitrator Vince Ready to assist the parties in resolving outstanding issues in the employers plans for the Lower Mainland consolidation of Health Information Management services, and to finalize a labour adjustment agreement.

The two outstanding issues the parties were not able to resolve through negotiations were:

- â€¢ Release of information functions: is this work exclusively done by health science professionals?
- â€¢ Does the employer have grounds to exclude area coordinators from the bargaining unit?

Mr. Ready has now ruled on these matters.

On the first question, arbitrator Vince Ready ruled that Providence Health Care was "entitled to determine what work was to be done, and which classifications were to do the work" specifically where there was a mixed practice of classifications performing the same ROI work. Therefore, PHC can assign ROI functions to non-HSA classifications.

"This decision is disappointing," said HSA Senior Labour Relations Officer Dani Demetlika. "We believe British Columbians should feel secure that their private medical information is safeguarded by highly trained Health Information Management professionals with the expertise to perform this work -- and the ongoing commitment to the knowledge that is required to apply the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act on an everyday basis. Health information management professionals provide the expertise in security of health information."

On the second question, HSA argued that area coordinator positions should be included in the health science professional bargaining unit. Arbitrator Ready ruled that while this is true for some positions, not all area coordinators would have union protection.

Those included area coordinators are:

- â€¢ For the BC Cancer Agency Abbotsford Regional Hospital / Fraser Valley, Victoria and Kelowna
- â€¢ UBC Hospital/GF Strong; St. Marys; Squamish and Powell River
- â€¢ Chilliwack General Hospital / Fraser Canyon Hospital and Riverview Forensic
- â€¢ The position Leader Process Standards and release of information, currently excluded, will be brought into the HSA and assume the role of Regional Practice Leader for HIM consolidation.

"HSA is disappointed with these results," Demetlika said. "Our health science professionals have the best skill base to deal with the changing face of health care in Health Information Management," she said. "We fear this decision will ultimately erode the level of services currently provided to the public by health records administrators."

Demetlika said the unions legal counsel are examining the ruling, and will provide guidance on next steps.

"Until we are able to ascertain next steps -- now that Mr. Ready has determined which positions are included

and which are excluded -- those members who have provided an expression of interest for area coordinators positions and are impacted employees will have another opportunity to indicate their preference on area coordinator positions," she said.

-Those HSA members currently performing HIM release of information work will be maintained as HSA members and continue to receive all protections and benefits under the health science professionals agreement. Should you leave this position or post into a different HSA position, it will be posted as an HEU position."

As stated previously by the employer, HSA members involved in the HIM consolidation will transfer to the new employer ... Providence Health Care ... on August 5, 2011. Those health records administrators not transferring to the new HIM consolidated unit will be given access to PHC HIM vacancies before external employees. Article 29 and 30 will apply in these cases.

The arbitrators ruling also includes the process of labour adjustment to the new consolidated model. For more details, please consult the decision [posted here](#).

For more information on Lower Mainland consolidations, see www.hsabc.org/consolidations

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