



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 768-2813
jparent@nmcc.edu

April 13, 2007
NR07035

NMCC announces new program in medical coding to help meet local demand

Aroostook County - In response to a need articulated by the healthcare community in Aroostook County, Northern Maine Community College will this fall begin offering a new certificate program in medical coding, one of the fastest growing occupations in healthcare in the state of Maine.

Medical coding professionals review medical documentation provided by physicians and other healthcare professionals and translate the information into standardized numerical codes. The universally recognized coding system is then used by third-party payers, such as insurance companies, to justify services provided and to facilitate reimbursement. The coded data is also used to facilitate statistical classification and research, as well as to examine utilization patterns.

The NMCC certificate program will prepare students to sit for the coding certification examination. Upon successful completion of the examination, the candidate is eligible to become a certified professional coder (CPC).

Individuals completing the medical coding program will be prepared to work in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, physician offices, long-term care facilities and home health agencies. Employment opportunities are also found in nontraditional healthcare areas such as insurance companies, government agencies, computer software companies, as well as consulting firms.

“We recognize not only the great need for allied health professionals in this region, but also the great demand for support personnel, including medical coders. We are pleased to offer this program in direct response to the needs of area healthcare providers,” said Alan Punches, NMCC vice president and academic dean.

NMCC has been offering a stand alone class in medical coding since the spring of 2004. The number of students enrolled in the course has ranged from 12 to 20 students, even though the course has not been promoted as part of a program.

In addition to many requests from the healthcare community to develop a program in medical coding, students from the College medical office administration program who have taken the coding course have expressed an interest in continuing their studies to earn a certificate in this area.

Currently, four colleges in Maine offer a certificate in medical coding, including Central Maine Community College, Kennebec Valley Community College, Southern Maine Community College and the University College in Bangor.

“Since NMCC is centrally located within northern Maine, this presents an opportunity to offer the program of study to a wide base of geographical locations within the region,” said Dwight Clayton, chair of the NMCC business technology department, which will deliver the certificate program. “Hospitals and employers in Aroostook County are currently limited to a small pool of candidates and have had either to hire candidates and invest resources in training, recruit nationally, or utilize coders from consulting firms.”

According to a 2003 national survey conducted by the American Association of Professional Coders, the average salary of a medical coder without credentials is \$33,096 annually, or \$15.92 an hour. The average salary of a medical coder with credentials, such as the certified professional coder, is \$39,046 annually, or \$18.75 and hour.

Titles commonly held by medical coding professionals include billing specialist, patient account specialist, electronic claims processor, billing coordinator, billing auditor, coding specialist, inpatient hospital coder, emergency room medical coder, outpatient coder, and managed care organization coder.

The medical coding program is the second new program in a healthcare related field added to the NMCC curriculum for the fall. Earlier this year, the Maine Community College System approved a new associate degree program in medical assisting for NMCC.

Applications for admission into the medical coding certificate program and medical assisting associate degree program for the 2007 fall semester are currently being accepted by College. For more information or to apply, contact the NMCC admissions office at 768-2785.

#####