

October 2010

Certification Corner

Welcome to Certification Corner, Central Source's latest addition! Each month, you will find inspired tips and suggestions for achieving (and maintaining) hard-earned certification status.

This month, we're kicking off the column with an insightful Q&A from Government Affairs Director Josephine (Jo) Colacci, who joined the IAHCSSMM team last month. A big part of Colacci's role will be to develop a solid Government Affairs structure and strategic plan, and assist IAHCSSMM members and chapters in attaining legislative support and achieving certification at the state level. [Note: If you haven't yet read the news release announcing Colacci's arrival, you will find it in the 'Breaking News You Can Use' section in this issue.]



Editor: What are your main goals and objectives in your new role as IAHCSSMM's Government Affairs Director?

Colacci: My main goal, at this time, is to have a Government Affairs structure put in place by year's end. I am developing a strategic plan that will give direction on committees – and members will serve on these committees. I am also working to determine which organizations may be allies and/or adversaries on the certification issue. Also, I will be revamping the Government Affairs pages on IAHCSSMM's website. These are just a few examples of what I'm currently tackling with the strategic plan. Pending Executive Board approval, we will then distribute this information regarding the Government Affairs structure and strategic plan to members.

Another one of my primary goals is to help educate members on the political process. A great thing about running legislative issues at the state level is that state legislators are typically more accessible and open to discussion than those at the federal level. Most members will be pleasantly surprised by the willingness of their state legislators to discuss issues with them. That being said, I know the political process can seem daunting and intimidating. But it's important for our members to realize that they are the experts in Central Sterile Supply, not the legislators. This expertise will help educate legislators on the certification issue and what's at stake.

Additionally, I am going to make it very easy for members to contact their state's elected officials. Voter turnout tends to be lower for state legislative candidates, and the majority of our members probably cannot name their state senator and state representative. I want to help change that. Our members' voice matters because they are the constituents to these elected officials and hold the key to keeping them in or out of office.

Part of the Government Affairs plan will be sending out 'action alerts.' If we are running a certification bill in your state and the bill is up for a vote, we will send out an email action alert asking you to send your elected official a letter. A draft letter will be provided, along with the contact information for the individuals you need to contact.

If your state does not have a certification bill introduced for the year, I have another action plan for your state. I will be disclosing this information in the near future.

Editor: What is the top suggestion or tip you'd like to share with those who are setting their sights on certification initiatives in their respective states?

Colacci: The biggest thing I am going to change is how we talk about the certification issue. Currently, all of the information provided on certification contains the phrase 'mandatory certification.' From here on out, we are going to stop using the word 'mandatory.' This is because many elected officials do not like issuing 'mandates.' An elected official could simply oppose our bill because he/she views it as a 'mandate,' for no reason other than the fact that we included the word 'mandatory' in the language. This entire certification issue really boils down to the fact that it promotes healthcare quality and patient safety. This is a patient safety bill and the language and discussion surrounding it must reflect that.

I will also be putting together action plans for states interested in running a certification bill. There is a lot of ground work that needs to be completed before a bill is introduced, and members need to understand that it takes an average of three to five years to pass a bill (although some states may take longer to pass a bill and some may require less time). The political process can be equally frustrating and exciting. There will be moments of great victory and great setback. Either way, I will be here as a support system of encouragement throughout the whole process. I never give up – and neither should our members!

Have a state certification- or legislative-related question that you'd like answered in an upcoming issue? Email the Editor at Julie@iahcsmm.org.