

SPECIAL REPORT



STATE OF THE CDI PROFESSION? **NEVER BRIGHTER**

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INTRODUCTION:

CDI PROFESSION IN BLOOM

We've never been more excited about the future of the CDI profession. The data shows it—CDI professionals have a wide range of diverse roles to keep them challenged and advancing in their careers, including leadership positions should they desire it. And they're increasingly well-paid at all levels.

Yes, there are obstacles and difficulties. Aggressive payer denials. Looming technological leaps that some have predicted will spell the end of CDI and coding as professions. And along with the rest of the healthcare profession they're not immune from burnout, either.

But, we're not buying into doomsday predictions. Even advanced artificial intelligence like ChatGPT-4 still requires a human at the switch.

We see nothing but positives on the horizon. At least for staff; managers and directors will have their work cut retaining good people.

It's important that you do. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that on average it costs a company 6 to 9 months of an employee's salary to replace him or her, including recruiting and training costs. For a CDI professional making \$100,000 per year, that comes out to \$50,000-\$75,000.

Not a great picture for CDI leadership. But in this report we'll help you out with some actionable ideas for keeping your best people.

This report will also share some innovative ideas for advancing your career you might not have thought of.



Finally, we want you to know that **Norwood** is here as your partner. Our seasoned recruiters know the industry inside and out and can tailor a solution to your needs, whether that is sourcing permanent hires, or augmenting your team with temporary help to reduce DNFB.

ENJOY THE REPORT!





Note: For the following data we're indebted to the reporting of the Association of Clinical Documentation Integrity Specialists (ACDIS). Much of the data is from ACDIS' most recent CDI Week Industry Overview Survey and CDI Salary Survey. We encourage you to head to that site to read these reports in full. All analysis of the data is our own perspective. This report also represents a portion of a Norwood presentation delivered at the 2023 ACDIS National Conference.

DIVERSE ROLES

Unlike the early days where you were either a CDI specialist reviewing charts, or a CDI manager supervising CDI specialists reviewing charts, today CDI encompasses a diverse blend of roles and responsibilities.

- CDI specialist: 39% (compare to 2018; 69% held this title!)
- CDI managers: 19%
- CDI directors: 13%
- Team lead: 6%
- CDI supervisors: 5%
- Other: 18%

We're particularly interested in this last bullet; nearly one-fifth of respondents replied with a wide range of job types including CDI auditor, educator, second level reviewer, quality specialist, informaticist/analyst.

Takeaways: Leaders are needed, more than ever. And unique jobs are blossoming.



CHANGING HEALTHCARE LANDSCAPE LEADS TO MORE OPPORTUNITY

There is more diversity in the CDI profession itself, due to changing regulations, reimbursement methodologies. And as a response to payer tactics. For example:

- About 25% of organizations currently review outpatient records, which is nearly flat with 2021. Another 23.67%, however, say they plan to expand into outpatient in the near future
- The percentage of respondents involved in the denials or appeals process rose by nearly 10 points year-over-year to 67.91%.

Takeaways: New skills are needed to meet new demands. New roles are being created, added to organizational career ladders. If you're a leader, diversify!

Here are some additional interesting CDI/coding jobs pulled up with a brief perusal of the career tab on ACDIS.org:

- Retrospective query writer
- Clinical Validation/Coding Validation specialist
- Pediatric CDI specialist (APR-DRG expertise required)
- Quality Assurance Representative (HEDIS measures/technical specifications required)
- Hybrid senior coding clinical coding educator. The roles on this one were particularly intriguing: Will drive risk adjustment improvement initiatives, develop recommendations for risk adjustment remediation plans and create tools and databases to capture relevant data for assigned markets to achieve corporate and market specific risk adjustment goals and initiatives.





SALARIES: CDI PROFESSIONALS ARE WELL PAID

CDI professionals are not only recognized for their indispensable contributions to their organizations, but getting paid (well) for them.

- \$80,000-\$89,999: 15%
- \$90,000-\$99,999: 15%
- \$100,000 or more: 54%

The percentage of respondents making six figures is jumping by 10% YOY. Up from 42% in 2021, 33% in 2019; and 21% in 2018.

CDI professionals are still getting paid more in the Pacific regions (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA—22% making \$160,000 or more) and Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT—16% making \$160,000 or more), but we expect this to even out.

Effort and creativity being rewarded: 44% who got a raise say it was merit/performance-based, e.g., taking on additional CDI related projects. That's higher than those who got a cost-of-living raise (41%).



Medical Record

A. General Questions

Proposed Insured's Name: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Birth Date: _____ Email Address: _____

Address: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Phone Number: _____ ID Number: _____

Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Others _____ Are you a retiree? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Children: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Plan Choice: _____

B. Type of Health Coverage

Employees: ☐ Yes ☐ No Spouse: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Plan Choice: _____

Complete if Spouse/Children are Proposed for Insurance:

Name	DOB	Relationship to proposed insured	Birth Date	Age	Sex

C. The Policy

Units: _____

Payment Mode: ☐ Annual ☐ Semi-Annual ☐ Monthly Pmt (complete Pmt card)

Annual Premium: _____

Monthly Premium: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Takeaways: Going above and beyond pays off for staff. Leaders should be prepared to pay for talent but you can't (just) compete on salary.



Perhaps not so surprising in an age when more and more U.S. workers are working from home. But we've been around long enough to remember when CDI specialists were expected to be onsite, not so long ago.

HERE ARE SOME EYE-CATCHING STATISTICS.



PRE COVID-19:

- Only 13.43% of respondents were 100% remote, and 44% had a hybrid program with some remote options, leaving 42.57% fully on-site. That was just three years ago.
- 78% went fully remote during the pandemic and another 15.94% had a hybrid program with remote options.

POST COVID-19:

- 26.91% of respondents remain entirely remote with no on-site option
- 34.99% are completely remote but have an option to go on-site as needed/ desired; another 32.15% have a hybrid program of some sort

Only 5.95% of respondents are fully on-site, and 84% say their productivity increased or stayed the same after going home to work.

Takeaways: We're working remotely. It's a job satisfier for staff, albeit with employee engagement challenges for leaders. Get creative with Zoom...



AGE RANGES:

CDI IS A MIDDLE-AGED PROFESSION, TRENDING TOWARD RETIRING.

HERE ARE THE AGE RANGE OF RESPONDENTS:

- 62%: 40-59 years old
- 17%: 60-69
- 20%: Under 40

Most CDI professionals are nurses, and nurses are burned out. While it's not a 1:1 correlation (CDI is not directly involved in patient care), about one-fifth of nurses are projected to leave the workforce by 2027, according to a study recently released by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. Stress, burnout, and retirement were among the top reasons cited.



Takeaways: Replacing staff as they retire is becoming a top priority, as is succession planning for leadership. Survey data confirms this necessity; there is a small but noticeable shift of CDI professionals working into their 60s. In 2021 20% of respondents were 60 or older, and only 17% under 40.

CDI IS TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN, AND INCREASINGLY TECH DEPENDENT.

Today everyone is using an encoder and most are using some sort of assistive CDI review tool. For example, 73% are using some type of chart prioritization! 41% of respondents' organizations don't use NLP, and about 60% have not adopted CAPD—but these are coming.



EPIC is taking over the world—we are seeing Epic specific tech tools like Epic Cadence, ClinDoc, on resumes and requirements.

Moore's Law states that the number of transistors on a microchip doubles every two years. So, we can expect the speed and capability of our computers to increase every two years, and we will pay less for them. And this growth is exponential.

Takeaways: *Technological proficiency is now the expected norm, and CDI job seekers are asking about tools organizations use. Having the right tool can equal competitive advantage or disadvantage.*

The tools you use could be the tiebreaker for a candidate torn between two jobs. Mention them, and consider investing in the latest tech. Likewise, if you're a CDI professional, list the tools you've used on your resume and LinkedIn profile!



CHALLENGES

CDI IS NOT IMMUNE TO BURNOUT.




Quitting unfulfilling jobs is a high priority among workers.

According to a survey of 2,500 professionals conducted by CNBC, nearly half (46%) of U.S. workers plan to look for a new job in the next six months, citing low pay as their No. 1 reason for eyeing greener pastures.

No. 6 on the list: Medical coding (53%). While CDI is not mentioned, this profession is often grouped under that umbrella.

Why do CDI professionals leave the profession?

The largest percentage (45%) of respondents entered CDI because they wanted to grow professionally, and CDI offered me the chance to do so. So, why do they leave or plan to leave?

-  General burnout (52.19%)
-  Required overtime (51.43%)
-  Lack of remote work opportunities (51.34%)

When asked what would make them leave their specific position, respondents said management failure (91.27%), lack of raises/low compensation (90.45%), inadequate staffing (89.18%), and lack of advancement (87%).



Takeaways: Burnout prevention should be your foremost priority, which can be accomplished with professional growth opportunities, adequate staffing and ability to work remotely/set own hours. Listen to your people. People are still leaving managers, not jobs or organizations. Let's up our leadership and management game!



SUMMARY AND FINAL TAKEAWAYS

CDI in 2023 is:

- Diverse
- Increasingly well-paid
- Remote
- Tech heavy
- **In flux:** Older staff are retiring, and some are burned out and contemplating quitting. Younger CDI professionals are coming in; new bedside nurses are entering the CDI field.

Takeaway 1: *It's a good time to be a CDI professional: Never easier to exit your organization and pursue new opportunities*

Takeaway 2: *It's a tougher time to be a manager, director, or HR department in this environment*

Bonus takeaway: Build your personal brand

- Managers, how often do you Google candidates or check their social media accounts?
- These days, likely very often.
- What if you found someone who was actively engaged in a CDI Facebook group sharing awesome insights? Or writing helpful articles for LinkedIn?
- Your impression of that individual would go way up.
- Job seekers, this is a call to action. You're not just a resume. YOU are a brand. There are many tools you can use to build your personal brand; take advantage of them.

It's SHOCKING how few CDI professionals have made a career on social media.

Who will be our first RN or coding-credentialed CDI professional to make an impact?

Will it be you?

Make a difference.





Say goodbye to one-size-fits-all healthcare staffing and consulting solutions.

ABOUT NORWOOD

Norwood is a healthcare staffing and consulting company specialized in the mid-revenue cycle. We help you streamline your operations, optimize your revenue, and improve your ability to deliver better care.

We're on a mission to revolutionize the healthcare staffing industry. Our approach is simple: we prioritize integrity, and authenticity, and tailored solutions.

People are the lifeblood of what we do. Our mid-revenue cycle solutions experts and people experience team are passionate about service.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW WE HELP EMPLOYERS
GROW YOUR CAREER WITH US**