

CHAUSA Helps Members Secure Corporate Compliance

BY DAVID WARREN, PhD

In "Compliance Programs: What They Are and Why You Need One" (*Administrative Eyecare*), William A. Sarraille, JD, admonishes his audience that prosecutors have repeatedly stated they often determine whether to prosecute a medical practice on the basis of whether the practice has adopted a compliance program. If it has, prosecutors fear they will be unable to convince a jury of fraudulent intent, even when the government has identified billing or other errors.

As Sarraille correctly notes, a good legal strategy often begins before any legal action is mounted against an organization. And government prosecution can potentially cripple a healthcare facility from both a financial and a public relations point of view. But when we understand corporate compliance from the perspective of the foundational principles of the ministry, we are dealing with something more meaningful than keeping a Catholic hospital from being prosecuted.

For Ann Neale, the Catholic Health Association's (CHA's) senior associate, ethics, having a corporate compliance program is a matter of Catholic identity, which "is evident—or not—in all we do." Neale points out, "Corporate compliance need not be seen as another imposition or program that has to be implemented because some regulatory agency said so. Rather, corporate compliance is a baseline expression of our organizational integrity."

CHAUSA, CHA's website, provides a growing collection of resources (based at www.chausa.org/misssvcs/ethics/corpcomp.asp) to help CHA members with the full range of issues related to corporate compliance. That means links to nuts-and-bolts articles like the one by Sarraille. But it also means links to thoughtful discussions of the connection between corporate compliance programs and organizational integrity, such as a presentation by John Gallagher, ethicist at Holy Cross Health System, South Bend, IN.



Dr. Warren is web editor, Catholic Health Association, St. Louis.



It is no accident that the CHAUSA corporate compliance collection is housed in the mission section of the website, even though the topic is closely connected to the interests of in-house counsels and public policy advocates.

KEEPING UP WITH REGULATIONS

A special feature of the CHAUSA corporate compliance collection is the page titled "Important Internet Resources for Corporate Compliance Officers" (www.chausa.org/misssvcs/ethics/oigurls.asp). This is a guide to keep CHA members up-to-date on critical regulatory matters. According to Peter Leibold, CHA's general counsel, "Although compliance with regulations is not sufficient to meet their obligation to achieve organizational integrity, CHA members must be aware of guidance and regulations emanating from the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services." This page provides quick summaries of such important mandates and allows rapid linking to these government postings. Because the guide is maintained by public policy experts at CHA who strive to remain current with regulatory developments, members can rely on its being timely, accurate, and useful.

The CHAUSA corporate compliance collection also offers links to materials from CHA members who have instituted exemplary corporate responsibility programs. I like to point to such things on the website as illustrations of the collaborative nature of this enterprise. I thus urge you to not only use the CHAUSA corporate compliance resources but also to contribute.

The critics of Catholic healthcare would have the public believe that the success of Catholic health systems means they are just like any other well-run business, ultimately concerned only with the bottom line. Our adherence to mission—to the ethical imperatives that make Catholic healthcare Catholic—proves these critics wrong; and CHAUSA is an important tool for strengthening adherence to mission. □

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, January-February 1999
Copyright © 1999 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
