NCRA Disagrees with New CoC Standards
Eliminating Support for CTR Education

The American College of Surgeons, Commission on Cancer (ACoS-CoC) released its *Optimal Resources for Cancer Care: 2020 Standards* on October 22, 2019. NCRA acknowledges the time and effort needed to revise the Cancer Program Standards and applauds the CoC for the changes focused on improving cancer patient outcomes, but we are very disappointed with the CoC’s decision to remove education support for Certified Tumor Registrars (CTRs). NCRA questions if the intent of the new Standards to improve patient outcomes will be jeopardized given that cancer registrars — the key staff responsible to equate successful outcomes — have lost educational support in those same Standards.

For the past two years, NCRA has advocated, on behalf of its membership, providing feedback to the CoC as it began the process to modify the standards. The communications occurred via NCRA’s Board-appointed liaison to the CoC and between the leadership of both organizations.

NCRA’s member-driven feedback to the CoC was clear and concise, expressing repeatedly its members’ concerns that a decision to no longer support the education of CTRs at a national conference jeopardizes the quality of the data and burdens registrars seeking the highest quality education. The Commission responded to NCRA that support for all education and training requirements, including those for physicians and nurses, was removed from the Standards. NCRA argued that physicians and nurses typically receive institutional support for training and travel — benefits often not afforded cancer registrars.

NCRA noted that cancer registrars need and value the leverage that the language in the Standards provided them in securing funding and approval to attend national educational conferences and without the specific language, registrars may lose the support to attend national conferences. NCRA offered the CoC statistics on the educational value attendees received by participating in the NCRA annual conference, citing:

- 86% of respondents felt that they had some or significant improvement in their “ability to perform responsibilities in the registry.”
- 87% of respondents felt that they had some or significant improvement in their “ability to be a key source of cancer registry information for your facility.”
- 91% of respondents felt that they had some or significant improvement with “comprehension of the field.”
- 86% of respondents felt that they had some or significant improvement in “understanding data quality practices.”

The removal of the supportive language for CTR education is especially disconcerting in a time when standard setters, including the CoC, have increased expectations of data quality and performance from cancer registrars unlike any time before.

To address the loss of educational support for the CTR professional created by the CoC’s decision, NCRA is working with its cancer registry partners to identify possible solutions and to establish policies that support registrars attending national educational conferences. NCRA will continue to provide updates on its work in this area. Meanwhile, members working in CoC-accredited facilities are encouraged to offer feedback to the CoC.