

AHIMA Naming Policy Pledge Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a naming policy?

A critical component of accurately identifying patients using patient demographics is the implementation of a **naming policy**. A naming policy provides a structured way to collect patient demographics in health information systems.

Why is a naming policy important in today's healthcare ecosystem?

Without a standardized naming policy, healthcare organizations are free to decide what patient demographic data elements are collected in their health information systems. This is a known problem in today's environment where patient data is shared widely. Since patient demographic data is generally used to identify and match patients to their unique health record, inconsistencies in how patient demographics are captured further perpetuates mismatching. The lack of a standard demographic data set can also lead to patient records not being linked to one another, resulting in health information being unavailable at the time the provider is treating the patient.¹ In both instances, human intervention may be required to mitigate such errors.

Why is AHIMA leading this effort?

As a global organization that represents health information professionals who work with health data for more than 1 billion patient visits each year, our vision is a world where trusted information transforms health and healthcare by connecting people, systems, and ideas. To achieve this vision, accurate patient identification is fundamental and when patient demographic data is standardized through the use of a naming policy, the data is often more accurate, more complete, and more trusted.

¹ Lusk, Katherine, et al. "Patient Matching in Health Information Exchanges." *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, 2014. <https://perspectives.ahima.org/patient-matching-in-health-information-exchanges/>