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Meet Jiajia Veronica Xu: A compliance enthusiast and storyteller

Jiajia Veronica Xu is the Chief Compliance Officer for Saber Healthcare Group, headquartered in Cleveland, OH. SCCE & HCCA CEO Gerry Zack interviewed Jiajia Veronica Xu (veronica.xu@saberhealth.com) in late June.

GZ: You've mentioned that you knew from an early age that you wanted to be an attorney. Why did you choose that over other professions? How did you achieve it?

VX: At a very young age, my father introduced to me a lot of Hollywood movies about lawyers, prosecutors, and judges. So I grew up watching them and absolutely loved it. Those gripping courtroom debates always got me excited. As I grew more mature, they meant more than just oral arguments to me; it was the art of legal language, power of persuasiveness, critical thinking, analytical skills, and effective communication behind the lawyers' presentations that fascinated me so much that I wanted to be just like them. I believe that, with the legal knowledge, communication skills, and a passion for justice, I can help people and make a difference. That was my dream, so I set up goals and developed plans to reach them. I had been on the debate team since high school and did numerous speeches for my schools and communities at various occasions. I was determined to go to law school, even though the tuition cost was a practical barrier I had to face. I remember my mom telling me, "Even if you sold your dad, he would not be worth that much." But I didn't give up. After winning multiple merit-based scholarships, I was able to go to law school and pursue my dream.

GZ: You worked in a law firm for several years before assuming this role in your organization. What was it about compliance that attracted you to this profession?

VX: Actually, the opportunity presented itself and I am glad I seized it. When my best friend saw the job posting online, he forwarded it to me and said he thought I would be a great fit. I already did corporate governance and regulatory work when counseling clients, and this one seemed to be an amazing opportunity, so I applied. Then, I was lucky that I got picked. After I started, I just fell in love with compliance. I have been excited and passionate about compliance work because it's dynamic, interesting, fascinating, challenging, and unique. I get to interact with various parties—internal and external—and advise teams on different investigations and matters.

GZ: You are the chief compliance officer for your organization, which is one of the largest long-term care providers in the nation. When you first assumed your responsibilities at your organization, what did you identify as your priorities? Have those efforts come to fruition?

VX: That's a good question. We definitely have come a long way. When I first started, our compliance department had a staff of one, which was just me. We did not have a formal compliance program, so everything needed to be built from scratch. I started a monthly compliance newsletter that contains industry news, useful tips, best practices, and compliance reminders. I received a lot of positive feedback from our employees. Also, to better understand the organizational structure, regulatory environment, business objectives, etc., I immersed myself in the world of reading for quite some time. There were so many things I wanted to do, such as compliance training, policy management, investigation protocols, licensure monitoring, but I had to prioritize. As a one-person department, I needed to wisely allocate time and focus on the most urgent items. After discussions with key stakeholders and thoughtful deliberation, the hotline program, exclusion checks, and HIPAA policies were the top three action items to be tackled based on the risk level, available resources, and complexity of the projects. They

were established within the first six or seven months, but as we all know, compliance measures are never static. We continue to review, improve, and refine them. For example, we revamped our hotline program a couple of years ago, which was a success. Over the years, with the support of the management, my team has grown. I feel fortunate to have awesome team members who are dedicated and supportive.

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