

Health Information Compliance Alert

HIPAA Transactions: E-Z EXTENSION

The **Department of Health and Human Services** has followed through on its promise that it wouldn't ask much of health care organizations seeking an extension to the compliance deadline for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act transactions standard.

Legislation passed late last year allows HIPAA covered entities a one-year compliance extension from Oct. 16, 2002 to Oct. 16, 2003 if they submit to HHS a compliance plan sketching out their line of attack for dealing with the transaction standard. The drafters of the law intended the compliance plan to be a "minimal reporting requirement."

And a model plan issued by the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** March 29 shows that covered entities need not anguish over qualifying for the delay. The 4-page, 26-question form asks little more than checking "yes" or "no" to various questions about compliance efforts which CMS divides into three phases: HIPAA awareness, operational assessment, and development and testing and entering projected target dates for accomplishing certain compliance activities.

"This model plan will help healthcare businesses prepare to meet these transaction standards while giving them until October 2003 to finish the job," HHS Secretary **Tommy Thompson** says. "Once adopted, these national standards will make it less costly to process claims, reducing administrative costs nationwide," he promises.

The form can either be filled out on paper and mailed to CMS, or submitted online.

Editors Note: To answer and submit the form electronically, go to www.cms.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/TCSFormInstructions.asp?
To download a copy of the paper form, go to www.cms.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/default.asp.