

Health Information Compliance Alert

Information Technology Update: HHS To Transition AHIC To Private Sector Entity

Health IT leadership not confined to federal decision makers.

The feds are moving to further integrate health information technology policy in the public domain.

This summer, **Department of Health and Human Services'** Secretary **Mike Leavitt** announced a transition plan, including timelines and key activities, for transforming the **American Health Information Community** (AHIC) from a federal advisory committee to an "independent, private-sector health Information Technology (IT) leadership entity."

The transition is part of an effort to meet **President Bush's** goal of providing most Americans with access to secure electronic health records by 2014.

Goals: AHIC's charter mandates that the organization explore the formation of an AHIC successor organization, which will be a "voluntary public-private partnership within the private sector" that will "serve as the primary organization in the United States for leading the integration and use of health IT that is standards-based and interoperable while ensuring that health information is protected and portable," according to a recent HHS press release.

Secretary Leavitt praised AHIC's progress and explained the need for the transition, saying: "Over the past 20 months, the AHIC has proven its ability to effectively and efficiently address the breadth of complex issues surrounding the advancement of better health care through health information exchange . . . Now we must preserve in the private sector the significant momentum the AHIC has created to engage key stakeholders across the health care spectrum to ensure long-term sustainability as a guiding force for health IT development."

The AHIC successor will employ representatives from federal and state governments and from the private sector. This collaboration of public and private interests will help the new ASO to adapt to changing needs and demands--technical or otherwise, according to an HHS release.

AHIC has been soliciting input throughout this process and the final prototype and transition plan was presented at the Sept. 18 AHIC meeting. The timeline for this year and next goes as follows:

- **Fall 2007:** The new entity will be formed and begin to operate as the new ASO
- **Early 2008:** The ASO will be formed and an interim Board and meeting schedule will be announced
- **January 2009:** The permanent ASO Board will be selected.

A Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was issued in August to announce funding for the "entity selected to design and establish the AHIC successor by spring 2008," said HHS. A grant will be awarded this fall.