

## Health Information Compliance Alert

### STIMULUS: Electronic Health Records Policy Takes Next Big Step

But officials put their heads together to define 'meaningful use' of EHR.

To receive the electronic health record incentive payments, providers must demonstrate "meaningful use" of a certified EHR.

The Health Information Technology Policy Committee, a Federal Advisory Committee to the Department of Health and Human Services, met on June 16 to begin defining "meaningful use" of electronic health records. This meeting is a first step for the department, as it investigates possible definitions for meaningful use, according to an HHS press release.

"We are moving fast to achieve the President's goal to improve the health and well-being of every American through the on-going use of health information technology," stated HHS' National Coordinator for Health Information Technology **David Blumenthal, MD, MPP**. "The work of the policy committee is a first step toward assuring that technology -- the electronic health record -- is used in a meaningful way to provide better patient care."

The Recovery Act provides Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments to eligible providers, such as physicians and hospitals, to increase EHR adoption.

#### Policy to Come in Proposed Rule

Building on the work done by the HIT Policy Committee, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology will be developing a proposed rule that provides greater detail on the incentive program and proposes a definition of meaningful use. CMS expects to issue the proposed rule in late 2009, which will be followed by a comment period.

The recommendations discussed in the June 16 meeting represent extensive work by the Committee's Meaningful Use Workgroup to review ideas from Workgroup members along with information from a public hearing on meaningful use convened. In fact, the NCVHS hearing brought together key healthcare and information technology stakeholder groups, HHS cheered. The workgroup also reviewed written comments from additional diverse stakeholders.

"The workgroup's recommendations demonstrate the breadth of meaningful use and the linkage of use to individual care and population health outcomes," Blumenthal said. "ONC and CMS recognize that achieving meaningful use will not be easy, but it is a journey we must take if we are to improve care through the use of EHRs."

For information specific to the CMS EHR incentive program, visit <http://cms.hhs.gov/Recovery>.