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ONC Releases Operating Plan for HIT Stimulus

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT has released to Congress an operating plan for implementing the health IT provisions included in the federal stimulus package, *Health Data Management* reports.

"This operating plan outlines immediate actions to meet statutory requirements and to begin the huge task ahead," the eight-page document notes. According to the plan, ONC will hold hearings and meetings over the next several weeks to develop and evaluate plans and procedures.

In the plan, National Coordinator for Health IT David Blumenthal said he knows ONC must "act swiftly but thoughtfully" The operating plan details 19 upcoming regulations, guidance, reports and studies regarding enhanced privacy and security rules, as well as their deadlines under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The plan also cites six tasks and their due dates for heightened enforcement of the enhanced HIPAA privacy and security rules.

In addition, the plan lays out steps for:

- Defining "meaningful use" of an electronic health record;
- Contracting for technical standards analysis services with the NIST;
- Adoption of initial standards, implementation specifications and certification criteria;
- Updating the federal health IT strategic plan;
- Communicating with the public
- Timetables for certain measures.

The operating plan does not offer a definition for meaningful use of EHRs or a timeline for when that definition might be released. According to the plan, "Specific understanding of what constitutes meaningful use will be determined through a process that will include broad stakeholder input and discussion."

The document also does not identify when HHS will establish a certification and testing procedure for EHR systems. However, the plan notes that Blumenthal is required to send HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius an initial set of standards, implementation specifications and certification criteria in September.

[ONC's operating plan](#) is available online (.pdf).