

# Rule Would Hasten EHR Adoption

## Standards Part Of \$19 Billion 2009 Stimulus Provision

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) issued a pair of new regulations shortly before the new year to speed adoption of electronic health records (EHRs).

The regulations come in the form of a proposed rule by CMS outlining EHR incentive programs, including defining the central concept of “meaningful use” of such technology. The second is an interim final regulation issued by ONCHIT that sets standards, implementation specifications, and certification criteria for EHR technology.

Congress required the definitions and standards as part of the \$19 billion it set aside in the February 2009

stimulus package for moving the health care sector to EHRs and away from traditional paper recordkeeping. The goal is for providers and caregivers to go digital in an effort to cut costs and reduce medical errors.

“Widespread adoption of electronic health records holds great promise for improving health care quality, efficiency, and patient safety,” said David Blumenthal, national coordinator for health information technology.

The two regulations are closely linked. The CMS proposal would define and specify how to demonstrate meaningful use of EHR technology, which is a prerequisite for receiving Medicare incentive payments. For instance, under the CMS plan, requirements include that at least 80 percent

of all patients who request an electronic copy of their health records receive it within 48 hours.

The CMS rule also outlines the proposed payment methodologies for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs. ONCHIT’s regulation explains the standards and specifications to enhance interoperability, functionality, utility, and security of health information technology, officials said.

The CMS proposed rule is at [www.cms.hhs.gov/Recovery/11\\_HealthIT.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Recovery/11_HealthIT.asp), and ONCHIT’s interim final rule is at <http://healthit.hhs.gov/standard-sandcertification>.

ONCHIT intends to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking in the early part of this year.

—Patrick Connoles

## Ohio Facility Wins National Better Business Bureau Award

A 110-bed skilled nursing facility in Springfield, Ohio, recently joined the ranks of Target Corp., American Honda Motor Co., and Verizon when it was named as a 2010 BBB International Torch Award for Marketplace Excellence recipient by the Council of Better Business Bureaus (CBBB). Villa Springfield Health and Rehabilitation Center earned the honor thanks to its display of “superior commitment to exceptional standards that benefit customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, and surrounding communities,” according to CBBB.

The International Torch Awards are given to businesses and executives exhibiting integrity in the marketplace and exemplary dedication to fostering trust between businesses and consumers, CBBB’s Web site



**Villa Springfield plans to hold an open house for the community later this year to celebrate its award.**

says. Announcement of the award came just months after Villa Springfield was given a local CBBB 2009 Integrity Award. “After we won that award, we were encouraged to apply for the Torch Award,” says Bill Robinson,

Villa’s executive director. “So we sent our application to the judges and found out in November that we won.”

Robinson will travel to Washington, D.C., in April with his director of nursing and the marketing director to receive the award.

“As far as I can tell, we are the first health care organization to win a Torch Award,” Robinson says. “We looked up all the award recipients and couldn’t find any other health care companies.”

To celebrate, Robinson says he will hold an open house for the community later this year.

“I’m so proud of my team for treating our customers as if they are family members, because that’s what we do,” says Robinson.

—Meg LaPorte