

# Federal Health IT Strategic Plan

## What You Need to Know

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In March 2011, the Office of the National Coordinator released a plan for guiding IT investment through 2015. The 80-page Federal Health IT Strategic Plan zeroes in on health IT adoption, data and information exchange, improved health outcomes, patient access to electronic health records (EHRs) and privacy and security protections. The plan also accommodates the healthcare reform law of 2010 and the economic stimulus law of 2009, for which Congress approved \$20 billion for hospitals and physician practices that adopt and meaningfully use EHRs.

“Providing strategic leadership to public and private sector efforts to improve health and health care through the use of information and technology is a key responsibility of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC),” wrote David Blumenthal, MD, former National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. “The Federal Health IT Strategic Plan is an important tool for guiding national efforts and investments in health IT over the next several years.”

### The Federal Health IT Strategic Plan outlines five goals for health IT:

1. Foster business models that create health information exchange, facilitate exchange of information where it hasn't yet occurred and ensure information exchange across multiple business models.
2. Integrate health IT adoption into the national strategy and plan developed via the Affordable Care Act of 2010.
3. Improve the privacy and security of health information; increase awareness of privacy and security among providers, payers, vendors and the public.
4. Empower healthcare consumers by providing access to their electronic health information.
5. Establish a learning health system that aggregates, analyzes and applies health information across multiple constituencies and populations.

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●● *The Federal Health IT Strategic Plan is essential to easing the transition to meaningful use and accountable care. Government, providers and vendors will use the document to foster health information exchange, a learning healthcare system and healthcare transformation through technology.* ●●

Mark Briggs, CEO, ABILITY

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## Achieve Adoption and Information Exchange Through Meaningful Use of Health IT

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) outlines three objectives to improve adoption and meaningful use of EHRs. Among the objectives:

1. Accelerate adoption of electronic health records. HHS plans to fulfill its commitment to offer financial incentive payments, encouragement and implementation assistance to providers who adopt, implement and use certified EHR technology. While supporting a trained health IT workforce, HHS will push for the inclusion of meaningful use in professional certification and medical education, as well as a certification process that supports meaningful use and improved EHR usability.

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*“Payers, providers and vendors can be confident in having the government’s full support in achieving meaningful use... It’s encouraging to see private sector payers stepping up to the plate with their own incentive programs similar to meaningful use.”*

Mark Briggs, CEO, ABILITY

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2. Facilitate information exchange to support meaningful use. Only with interoperability and information exchange can providers, payers and vendors achieve success in stages two and three of meaningful use. HHS will take the lead in fostering models for health information exchange, filling gaps in existing exchange models and making sure exchange occurs across models.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is likely to build on programs such as NHIN Direct and Connect, while expanding on goals cited in the Standards and Interoperability Framework and the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology report, “Realizing the Full Potential of Health Information Technology to Improve Healthcare for Americans: The Path Forward.”

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*“There’s little doubt that standards and interoperability requirements will grow more stringent as information flows between payers, vendors, providers and patients at the point of care. Organizations like the Care Connectivity Consortium reveal the growing willingness of providers, payers and vendors to collaborate in the secure exchange of electronic health data.”*

John Feikema, President, ABILITY

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3. Support health IT adoption and information exchange for public health and populations with unique needs. DHHS is committed to making sure that public health agencies receive and share information with providers using certified EHR technology. Ideally, public health data sharing will help track and reduce dramatic healthcare disparities [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/index.htm)

DHHS will also take advantage of Affordable Care Act initiatives to ensure EHR adoption in long-term post-acute, emergency and behavioral health settings. For example, ONC will likely join forces with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) while partnering with Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response to develop policies and standards for data use during emergencies or disasters.



## GOAL TWO

### Improve Care and Population Health and Reduce Healthcare Costs through HIT

Support more sophisticated use of EHRs and other HIT technologies to improve health system performance. With the input of providers, payers and vendors, ONC will implement best practices for using EHRs and other health IT technologies to improve care quality, efficiency and population health and reduce the costs and administrative burdens of providers, payers and government health programs.

Look for ONC to demonstrate ongoing focus on quality measures in meaningful use, HIT Resource Center best practice sharing, Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) demonstrations and decisions on administrative efficiencies such as ICD-10.

Better manage care, efficiency, and population health through EHR-generated reporting measures. ONC will develop measures that align with the National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan, while also creating standards, specifications and certification criteria for quality data collection and reporting using certified EHR technology.

Demonstrate health IT-enabled reform of payment structures, clinical practices and population health management. The ONC will continue its funding and management of demonstration communities to show how health IT can improve care, efficiency, and population health and aligns IT initiatives with clinical and payment reform pilots and demonstrations. The ONC is likely to use lessons learned from Beacon Communities, the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service in its work with private sector IT vendors, provider networks and payers.

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●● *The 17 Beacon communities selected by ONC in 2010 have come a long way in creating an implementation framework. We now have a better sense of how these communities create governance structures, performance measures, clinical interventions and rapid cycle learning strategies. Their experiences will provide a reservoir of health IT knowledge for providers, payers and health information partners like ABILITY.* ●●

Mark Briggs, CEO, ABILITY

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Support new approaches on the use of health IT in research, public and population health, and national health security. ONC will look for new ways health IT can support prevention, health promotion, public health, and national health security. To that end, it will invest in IT infrastructure that supports the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy and promotes information exchange for research and dissemination of research findings to clinicians.



## Inspire Confidence and Trust in Health IT

Protect confidentiality, integrity, and availability of health information. ONC will promote policies that protect health information privacy and security, while enforcing existing federal privacy and security laws. At the same time, ONC will work to incorporate more privacy and security functionality into health IT, address health IT security vulnerabilities and share privacy and security best practices. The key will be leveraging updates to the HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules from the HITECH provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Inform individuals of their rights; increase transparency on the use and sharing of protected health information. ONC is committed to informing healthcare consumers and patients of their privacy and security rights, including how health information is used and shared. It will enhance transparency on policies and standards related to the use and sharing of protected health information and insist on easy-to-understand notifications of widespread security breaches.

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●● *ABILITY endorses strategies that protect privacy, security and confidentiality, while improving consumer and public confidence in how health IT supports healthcare transformation. As healthcare leaders, we have an obligation to inform people of their rights and changes to the law, boost transparency on use of protected health information, and make breach notifications easy to read and understand.* ●●

**Steve Smerz**, Vice President of Technical Operations, ABILITY

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Improve safety and effectiveness of health IT. ONC is dedicated to providing payers, providers and vendors with implementation and best practice tools, monitoring IT safety issues, and updating approaches to health IT safety.



# GOAL FOUR

## Empower Individuals with Health IT to Improve their Health and the Healthcare System

Engage individuals with health IT. ONC will listen closely to healthcare consumers and implement health IT policies and programs that fit their needs and preferences, while transmitting messages through varied communication vehicles.

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*“Few strategies are more important than leveraging health IT to engage patients as active participants in their healthcare. By more fully engaging people in their own care, payers, providers and vendors like ABILITY can improve care quality and safety, reduce costs and generate better outcomes.”*

Paul Tuten, Vice President of Product Management, ABILITY

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Accelerate individual and provider access to electronic health information in formats they can use and reuse. Using Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs, ONC will encourage providers to offer patients greater access to their health information. Working with federal agencies that deliver or pay for healthcare, ONC will share its tools for sharing information with individuals. Finally, ONC will develop policies that foster patient and provider access to health information while safeguarding privacy and security.

Integrate patient-generated health information and consumer health IT with clinical applications to support patient-centered care. ONC supports standards and tools that allow EHR technology to interact with consumer health IT and will work to build these requirements into the EHR certification process.

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*“Providers, payers and health information partners like ABILITY must integrate patient-generated health information and consumer health IT with clinical applications to ensure that patients and families remain at the center of their care.”*

John Feikema, President, ABILITY

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## Achieve Rapid Learning and Technological Advancement

Lead the creation of a learning health system to support quality, research, and public/population health. Based on the learning health system concept pioneered by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), ONC will create a group of learning health system leaders, develop e-standards, policies, and technologies to connect participants within the learning health system and involve patients, providers, researchers, and HCOs in exchanging information through the learning health system. ONC will grow the learning system by adding members, expanding policies and standards and acting on the ongoing reports of IOM.

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●● *Patients, providers, payers and vendors must help ensure that information exchange leads to solid improvements in quality, safety, efficiency, population health, disease surveillance and chronic care management. Only by cultivating and sharing fresh ideas, insights and best practices can our healthcare system become an authentic learning health system.* ●●

John Feikema, President, ABILITY

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Broaden the capacity of health IT through innovation and research. ONC will facilitate health IT innovation by liberating health data, making targeted investments in health IT research, using government programs as innovation test beds, and offering providers and payers guidance on government roles and policies.

Providers, payers and vendors can look forward to a future that supports liberated healthcare data, Strategic Health IT Advanced Research Projects (SHARP) grants to support innovation and best practices from federal initiatives at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Indian Health Service and other agencies.



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### About ABILITY™

ABILITY works to save lives by facilitating information exchange and knowledge sharing among every participant within the healthcare spectrum – hospitals, physician practices, home care providers, DMEs, and private and government payers. More than 3,000 hospitals across the country use ABILITY network to promote care coordination and collaboration, reduce record fragmentation, participate in new care models, streamline administrative workflow and access the Direct Project network and state and community-based Health Information Exchanges.