

Frequently Asked Questions About the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Developed by the AAP Departments of Practice and Federal Affairs

Pediatricians have many questions about the impact of the incentives available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to support the adoption of health information technology. While many of the details will need to be determined through the regulatory process, AAP staff has developed the following FAQs to provide answers to some of the most common questions.

1. Q: Is it true that the economic stimulus package includes financial incentives for both Medicare and Medicaid providers?

A: Yes, the economic stimulus package does contain financial incentives through both Medicare and Medicaid.

2. Q: Who will qualify for Medicaid incentives for health information technology adoption:

A: Pediatricians will need to have at least a 20% Medicaid patient population in order to qualify for incentives through this program. The legislation does not indicate how this percentage is to be calculated: per physician, per practice, or by some other means. These details will likely be addressed as part of the regulatory process in the coming months.

Please note that the AAP also advocates for financial incentives through private payers, but that was not addressed in this particular legislation. The AAP will continue to advocate for financial support to help pediatricians move toward health information technology adoption.

3. Q: How soon can I receive my share of the Medicaid incentives?

A: Incentives will not begin until 2011, and will likely provide reimbursement for some of the practice's cost post-implementation. So you'll need to adopt an electronic health record (EHR) first in order to qualify for the incentives.

The AAP has several resources available to help its members select and implement an EHR. Please see below for more information.

4. A: Are there any restrictions on which EHRs will qualify for incentives?

A: It is likely that physicians will need to demonstrate that they have implemented a “certified” EHR in order to qualify for the incentives. The exact definition of “certified” will have to be determined through the regulatory process, but this may refer to EHRs that have been certified through the Certification Commission on Health Information Technology. You can find out more information at www.cchit.org. The AAP also encourages its members to look for vendors that have the CCHIT's Child Health add-on certification

In addition, healthcare providers will need to implement “meaningfully useful” health information technology, and the EHR must permit some form of health information exchange. Once again, the exact requirements will need to be determined via the

regulatory process. The AAP will closely monitor ongoing developments and provide feedback to the US Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services when feasible.

Each year at the National Conference & Exhibition (NCE), the AAP Council on Clinical Information Technology sponsors a Pediatric Documentation Challenge. This event provides pediatricians with the opportunity to see several EHRs in action. If you are planning to attend this year's NCE in Washington, DC, please plan to attend the Pediatric Documentation Challenge to see how available EHRs handle a typical pediatric office visit.

5. Q: What resources are available to help me choose an EHR?

A: The AAP has many resources available to help its members implement an EHR. These include:

- The March 2007 clinical report, "Special Requirements for Electronic Health Records Systems in Pediatrics," which can be found at <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;119/3/631>.
- A toolkit, "Implementing an Electronic Health Record," which can be found on Practice Management Online at <http://practice.aap.org/ehr.aspx>.
- An EHR review web site (www.aapcocit.org/emr), where AAP members can post comments about the systems they use.
- Membership in the AAP Council on Clinical Information Technology (COCIT), including several e-mail discussion lists and a semiannual newsletter. To join COCIT, visit the Online Section/Council Membership Application at <http://www.aap.org/moc/memberservices/sectionform.cfm>, or, for more information, visit the COCIT Web site at <http://www.aapcocit.org>.

For more information regarding ARRA or available resources for selecting and implementing an EHR, please contact Beki Marshall at 800/433-9016, ext 4089 or bmarshall@aap.org.