



## **Codifying the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT**

“The Secretary of Health and Human Services ... shall establish within the Office of the Secretary the position of National Health Information Technology Coordinator.”

■ President George W. Bush, Executive Order 13335, April 2004

### **Call to Action**

Executive Order 13335 established the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) in 2004. Since its inception, ONC has led a national discussion on the role healthcare IT can have in enabling improvements in quality, timeliness, and cost effectiveness of healthcare delivery in the U.S. ONC initiatives have been at the center of industry activities supporting the adoption of HIT solutions by medical facilities and clinicians across the nation. ONC is encouraging dialogue on achieving measurable results, while respecting necessary privacy, security, and confidentiality requirements. Examples of the initiatives and contracts include:

- **American Health Information Community:** A public-private federal advisory commission established in June 2005 to address EHRs, chronic care improvement, consumer empowerment, and public health. ([www.hhs.gov/healthit/community](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/community))
- **Nationwide Health Information Network Prototypes:** Four contracts sponsored by ONC to develop and test possible architectures for interoperable, standards-based healthcare information exchange. ([www.hhs.gov/healthit/healthnetwork](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/healthnetwork))
- **Health IT Standards Panel:** A public-private initiative established in October 2005 to achieve widespread acceptance of standards to enable interoperability between HIT software systems and promote healthcare information exchange.
- **Certification Commission for Health IT:** A private sector volunteer-based initiative, with some funding from ONC to develop, create prototypes for, and evaluate certification criteria and inspection process for EHRs. ([www.cchit.org](http://www.cchit.org))
- **Health Information Security and Privacy Collaborative:** An AHRQ-ONC contract to assist states in identifying and resolving barriers to regional and national health information exchange. ([www.rti.org](http://www.rti.org))
- **State Alliance for eHealth:** An ONC contract with the National Governors Association to develop a collaborative effort to enable states to improve the quality and cost of healthcare delivery by addressing common challenges. ([www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org))

Industry support for ONC is evident in the number of volunteers and organizations that participate in the various activities. The Administration has provided support through the FY2008 President’s Budget Request. In recent years, over 20% of the Executive Orders have been rescinded or modified from one administration to the next. Changing presidential priorities may dismantle ONC and delay industry initiatives to advance interoperability, standards adoption, and healthcare information exchange.

### **Closing Remarks**

HIMSS supports legislation to codify the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT within the Department of Health and Human Services to accelerate the appropriate development of health information exchange through integration and interoperability, standards adoption, and privacy and security in the healthcare community.