

Approaching a definition of “Meaningful Use”

The advisory group responsible for creating the government’s definition of “meaningful use” of Electronic Health Records presented its recommendations June 16, providing a better idea of what will be expected of you and your practice in years to come. This was the *beginning* of their discussions on the definition of meaningful use.

[\(Click here if you would like to view the definition recommendations.\)](#)

The framework for definition was based in part on the 2008 the National Quality Forum (NQF) report entitled “National Priorities and Goals” which identified a set of national priorities to help focus performance improvement efforts. Among these priorities were patient engagement, reduction of racial disparities, improved safety, increased efficiency, coordination of care, and improved population health. An additional area related to privacy and security was also included to emphasize the importance of preserving patient protections and ensuring patient trust in the use of electronic health records.

Under the current plan, the definition of meaningful use will change over time, with the expectations of physicians growing over the years. Physicians in 2011 and 2012 will be expected to show they have the ability to capture and share data. In 2013, the data must be used to advance care processes. By 2015, the government wants to see improved outcomes. This progression is identified in the Meaningful Use Matrix that was developed by the workgroup. The matrix represents a set of objectives and care processes that they believe should help shape the ultimate definition of meaningful use.

[Click here to view the Meaningful Use Matrix.](#)

The definition of meaningful use is important because in order for physicians to receive incentive payments through the federal stimulus bill, they must show “meaningful use” of a certified system. (The definition of “certified” also is a work in progress). Physicians who do not show meaningful use by 2015 risk losing a portion of their Medicare payments. If you would like to comment on the preliminary definition of Meaningful Use you can do so by e-mail or written correspondence 5:00 pm (EDST) June 26, 2009.

[Click here for details.](#)