

Data Center Management **briefs**

Healthcare Receives Stimulus

by Phil Britt

The \$787 billion stimulus package passed by Congress and signed into law earlier this year includes several provisions expected to impact data center managers who work with healthcare organizations.

Among the provisions in the stimulus bill is \$400,000 in incentives for those who use an electronic health records (EHR) system as well as new health information technology grant and loan programs and funds to speed the construction of a national health information network.

Though many of the exact requirements of the stimulus package have yet to be worked out, the available details include \$40,000 in incentives (beginning in 2011) for physicians to use an EHR system, funds to states to coordinate and promote interoperable EHRs, and acceleration of the construction of the National Health Information Network (NHIN).

"There are a lot of controls and criteria that go along with the allocation of the money," says Dan Shauver, lead storage architect for Laurus Technologies, Itasca, Ill. "[The government] will want additional data extraction, business intelligence and details about acceptable use of medical information. Data center managers will have to be able to get at that information. They have to have the ability to build reports from the data." Among those reports will be security and compliance details.

Shauver recommends that data center managers take time now to ensure they have access to this information, as well as verify who else in the organization has access to the same information. Sometimes employee authorizations for certain information are not changed when their status within the enterprise changes, such as moving from the data center to marketing or leaving the company altogether.

Dave Durbin, partner with Laurus Technologies, adds that the additional reporting requirements will mean data centers will need to interface smoothly with document management systems, an upgrade some data centers may need to make.

Lior Bilk, acting CIO for Hoboken University Medical Center and Network Infrastructure Technologies, Inc., recommends that data center managers who work with health care organizations should start with EHR planning committees that look not only at the details that Shauver and Durbin recommended but also at capacity utilization.

Some hospitals and other health care organizations have some elements of electronic health records, but they tend to be on a department-by-department basis right now. They will be going to enterprise-wide systems, which means more processing power, storage and power and cooling needs for the data center, says Bilk.

"Hospitals need to develop plans to add people to the [data center] systems," says Bilk. Not only will additional authorized doctors and medical staff need to be able to input information, but so will vendors of medical supplies and equipment. The data center infrastructure will need to be able to send and receive information through wired and wireless communications.

Going to EHR and making these upgrades will improve the quality of service and care because providers have access to more complete medical records of patients. This will reduce the risk of giving the wrong information, duplication of medication and duplication of tests," says Bilk.



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