2/9/26 WEDI FEDERAL UPDATE

ASTP/ONC Leader Speaks to WEDI Members, Hints at HTI-6 Regulation. Thomas Keane, MD, Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy (ASTP)/National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, spoke at the recent WEDI Town Hall, a WEDI member-only event. Dr. Keane outlined his agencies priorities and answered questions from members on topics including the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement™, the Office of the National Coordinator Electronic Health Record Certification Program, digital identity, and others. Dr. Keane also hinted that the agency would soon release the sixth Health Data, Technology, and Interoperability regulation (HTI-6) focused on software developer certification. A special thanks to the reaction panel, Julie Brown-Georgi (American Medical Association), Samantha Burch (AHIP), Rajesh Godavarthi (MCG Health), and moderator Alix Goss (Point of Care Partners).

HHS Funding Bill Signed, Extends Telehealth and Hospital-At-Home Program. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funding bill was signed into law, ending the partial government shutdown. The bill included extensions of two years for the Medicare telehealth waivers. Through December 31, 2027, Medicare beneficiaries can receive non-mental or behavioral health telehealth services outside of a medical facility or in a non-rural area and telehealth services by physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists. The bill also included a five-year extension for the Acute Hospital Care at Home program, including diabetes self-management training and medical nutrition therapy services furnished remotely by hospital staff to beneficiaries in their homes.

ASTP/ONC Releases Draft USCDI v7 for Public Comment. ASTP/Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) released through Standards Bulletin 2026-1 the United States Core Data for Interoperability Draft Version 7 (Draft USCDI v7). Draft USCDI v7 continues the expansion of standardized health data exchange to support improved patient care, enhanced nationwide health, greater affordability, and reduced clinician burden. It includes 29 proposed data elements and one revised data element. Thirteen of the proposed new data elements are already represented in exchange specifications required in the ONC Health Information Technology (IT) Certification Program. Nine proposed data elements are referenced in USCDI+ Quality. The remaining eight were submitted through the ONC New Data Element and Class system. In addition to the proposed data elements, ASTP/ONC is requesting feedback on several questions related to the USCDI format and implementation. The deadline for public comment is April 13, with release of the final USCDI v7 expected in July 2026.

HHS Announces Nationwide Pilot Programs to Improve Behavioral Health Data Exchange. HHS, with ASTP/ONC and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), announced the selection of nine nationwide pilot programs to test health IT standards aimed to strengthen behavioral and physical health integration through improved data exchange. The pilots are being funded through the Behavioral Health Information Technology Initiative, which is a $20M+ SAMHSA investment being implemented in partnership with ASTP/ONC. The pilot programs will test data elements in real-world behavioral health settings. Findings from the pilots will inform future standards, technical specifications, and policy considerations for the broader health provider community and shape future resources for the behavioral health community.

HHS Seeks Input on Diagnostic Imaging Interoperability Standards and Certification through RFI. HHS and ASTP/ONC are seeking feedback through the Diagnostic Imaging Interoperability Standards and Certification Request for Information (RFI), with comments due by March 16. The RFI addresses the potential adoption of diagnostic imaging technical standards and certification criteria for health IT under the ONC Health IT Certification Program to better enable the access, exchange, and use of diagnostic images by health care providers and patients. Questions in the RFI address: (i) Barriers for patients to access diagnostic images, such as policies, technology, and financial; (ii) Technical, operational, and policy approaches to support transitioning to electronic exchange; (iii) Access needs to full resolution diagnostic images; and (iv) Current technical approaches to enable access and exchange of diagnostic images. Responses to this RFI will be used to inform potential future rulemaking.

CMS Releases CY 2023 QPP Performance Information in Medicare.gov Compare Tool. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has released CY 2023 Quality Payment Program (QPP) performance information in the Provider Data Catalog (PDC) and on clinician and group profile pages on the Medicare.gov compare tool. CMS is required to report the final scores and performances of Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS)-eligible clinicians under each MIPS performance category, and names of the Advanced Payment Models and eligible clinicians in Advanced Alternative Payment Models. Performance information for clinicians and groups is displayed using measure-level star ratings, percent performance scores, and check marks. For details about the 2023 QPP performance information recently added in the PDC and on clinician and group profile pages on the Medicare.gov compare tool, visit the Care Compare: Doctors and Clinicians Initiative webpage.

OCR Releases HIPAA and Part 2 Resources in Support of SUD Treatment Month. The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released resources on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule and Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records Regulations at 42 C.F.R. Part 2 ("Part 2"). In recognition of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Month, OCR is highlighting guidance addressing HIPAA protections, the

obligations of covered health care providers, and some of the circumstances in which covered providers can share protected health information related to mental and behavioral health with an individual's friends, family, and loved ones. This guidance includes fact sheets, decision charts, and frequently asked questions. Part 2 protects the privacy of patients' treatment records and this OCR fact sheet provides additional on the requirements. Beginning on February 16, 2026, individuals can begin filing complaints to OCR of alleged violations of Part 2.

Health-ISAC Releases Report on Top Cyber Threats for Health Care. The Health-Information Sharing and Analysis Center (Health-ISAC) released its annual report, titled "2026 Global Health Sector Threat Landscape," with artificial intelligence-enabled attacks identified as the leading threat. The report also lists the top concerns facing health care organizations-based on analysis of data from 2025 from the Health-ISAC Ransomware Events Database, Indicator Sharing Program, Physical Security efforts, and Targeted Alerts initiative. The report seeks to provide leaders with knowledge to support a proactive approach to cybersecurity.