

# Inside Healthcare Computing

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## Vendors Respond to CCHIT's New Certification Paths

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Vendors we spoke with who are planning to apply for certification under CCHIT's new programs are not rushing to meet the October 7 application date. And another vendor indicated that for his high volume practice customers, the relatively small amount of federal incentive money they would receive simply wasn't worth the time and expense of taking its products through the certification process.

"We see two competing forces," says Evan Steele, CEO of NJ-based SRS, a company which sells modular EMR systems to high performance physician practices. "Those forces are *meaningful use*, where you're only focused on complying with the certification standards to get the incentive payments and *meaningful useability*, where you're focused on what the physicians really need to make their practices more efficient. We have to choose where to put our energies and we're choosing to focus on meaningful useability."

In addition to an updated comprehensive EHR certification program, called CCHIT Certified 2011, CCHIT will offer a modular certification program called Preliminary ARRA 2011 that is limited to the standards for qualifying EHR technology under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Commission's certification materials including criteria, test scripts and certification policies for both programs will be published at <http://cchit.org> on Sept. 24. Applications for certification will open online on Oct. 7.

While vendors spoke about the competitive edge certification has given them in the past, they are waiting for the dust to settle on the final regulations.

"We are planning to apply for both ARRA Meaningful Use certification as well as CCHIT's own certification program," says Mike Mitsock, chief marketing officer at Picis. "However, we're not sure at this point about when we'll go through the application process."

And, while very positive about CCHIT's role as the sole certifying body in the past, Mitsock says, "We think it's a good thing to have the possibility of additional certifying bodies. It gives vendors, hospitals, and ambulatory practices a choice, which we see as a positive development."

According to Mitsock, Picis would like to see CCHIT also move aggressively to develop certification paths for more specialties, such as radiology and ICU. "While we know CCHIT is moving on some of these high volume, high acuity specialties, we're urging them to move quickly to get others on the map."

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Texas-based MEDHOST is also planning on letting the smoke clear before going through the certification process. “We currently have a CCHIT-certified product and my gut is telling me to wait and see how everything plays out a few months down the road,” says Craig Herrod, the company’s president and CEO. “And frankly, emergency departments right now are so stressed and overwhelmed, ARRA incentives are almost secondary. Our customers just need something immediately that enables them to address the real issues they face.”

HHS criteria and standards are expected to be published by the end of 2009. Final rules on Meaningful Use are expected later in the Spring 2010. If that process results in the introduction of new requirements, CCHIT will offer vendors with preliminary certifications an incremental inspection at no additional fee to bring their certifications into alignment with the final rules.

CCHIT is offering a workshop in the Chicago area on Oct. 1. The purpose of the workshop, Get Certified 2011, is to orient companies and developers to the new certification process and to use the new certification program tools effectively. More information about the workshop is available now at <http://www.cchit.org/education/GetCertifiedFor2011>. ■