



Health Information Technology

ISSUE: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides \$20 billion in incentives and grants to health care providers and hospitals to establish interoperable electronic health record (EHR) systems throughout the nation. These benefits are extended to most physicians and hospitals, including child and adolescent psychiatrists. However, other mental health professionals, psychiatric hospitals, substance use and mental health treatment facilities are excluded. The incentives provided through ARRA for the meaningful use of electronic medical records would allow for non-medical mental health and substance use providers and psychiatric hospitals and facilities to be on par with the rest of the nation in the electronic exchange of health information, and as a result improve the health and safety of all patients.

THE SOLUTION: The Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2011 (S. 539) sponsored by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) would clarify the legislation and allow for additional mental health providers to improve the exchange of health information between mental health and other health care providers. The bill will specifically:

- Clarify the definition of “health care provider” throughout the HITECH Act to include behavioral and mental health professionals, substance abuse professionals, psychiatric hospitals, behavioral and mental health clinics, and substance use treatment facilities;
- Extends Medicaid meaningful use incentives to national accredited mental health treatment facilities, psychiatric hospitals, substance abuse treatment facilities, behavioral and mental health professionals, and substance abuse professionals;
- Establish grants for those mental health treatment facilities not eligible for meaningful use incentives through the HITECH Act to purchase certified EHRs, and train medical staff in the use of EHRs.

COST: The total cost for this bill is \$2 billion.

AACAP POSITION: AACAP urges Senators to co-sponsor **The Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2011.**