

# Children and Health Information Technology

It is the position of the American Academy of Pediatrics that health care reform should:

- ★ Establish standard national incentives provided through Medicaid and CHIP to encourage physicians to adopt, purchase and implement pediatric-appropriate electronic health records.
- ★ Enable pediatricians to obtain incentives from Medicaid, CHIP and the Small Business Administration so they can implement e-prescribing, much as other doctors have received financial rewards from Medicare for this purpose.
- ★ Include a study or demonstration project to examine the impact of interoperability on adolescent privacy.
- ★ Create an empowered pediatric representative in the Office of the National Coordinator for health IT.

## The Issue

Pediatricians recognize the importance of health information technology (health IT) as a source of value, quality and infrastructure improvement. However, they often find that clinical information systems have limited application in their practices because they lack pediatric functionality.

Pediatricians need health IT with pediatric-specific functionality and workflows, but also find it difficult to obtain funds to cover the costs of implementation. Additionally, they are also unwilling to accept the risk to their practice of a poor system or failed implementation. Pediatricians have high volumes and lower reimbursements; therefore, they typically have lower operating margins. As a result they have more difficulty than other doctors investing in health IT. Consequently, pediatricians are often forced to forgo improving their practices by purchasing health IT systems or are required to retrofit purchased systems with pediatric appropriate programs.

## Current Status:

Federal administrators are beginning to recognize the paucity of affordable pediatric-appropriate health IT systems. Significant new funding was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for pediatricians with at least a 20 percent Medicaid case mix. The use of these funds will best improve quality if pediatricians know which systems include pediatric functionality.