2015 INTEROPERABILITY STANDARDS ADVISORY:
BEST AVAILABLE STANDARDS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Quick Reference Factsheet

The 2015 Interoperability Standards Advisory (the 2015 Advisory) represents the model by which the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) will coordinate the identification, assessment, and determination of the best available interoperability standards and implementation specifications for industry use toward specific health care purposes. A Shared Nationwide Interoperability Roadmap – Draft Version 1.0 (Roadmap) indicates improving technical standards and implementation guidance for sharing and using a common clinical data set as one of the four critical pathways for achieving nationwide interoperability. With the 2015 Advisory, ONC in its role as a coordinator, will collaborate, facilitate, and provide the mechanisms by which dialogue can occur so that decisions are ultimately made toward the identification of standards and implementation specifications for specific purposes. To initiate this dialogue, ONC poses questions in the 2015 Advisory. The 2015 Advisory and future advisories will be published at www.healthit.gov/standards-advisory as a downloadable document and a webpage. ONC is accepting public comments on the 2015 Advisory now through 5 p.m. ET on May 1, 2015. You can submit comments here.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The 2015 Advisory's scope focuses on clinical health information technology (IT) interoperability. Specifically, the scope does not include transactions governed by regulations published to implement provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The 2015 Advisory's purpose is to prompt focused industry dialogue on areas where disagreement exists regarding the best available standards, as well as greater certainty and clarity on areas where widespread consensus exists.

1. To provide the industry with a single, public list of the standards and implementation specifications that can best be used to achieve a specific clinical health information interoperability purpose.
2. To prompt dialogue, debate, and consensus among industry stakeholders when more than one standard or implementation specification could be listed as the best available.
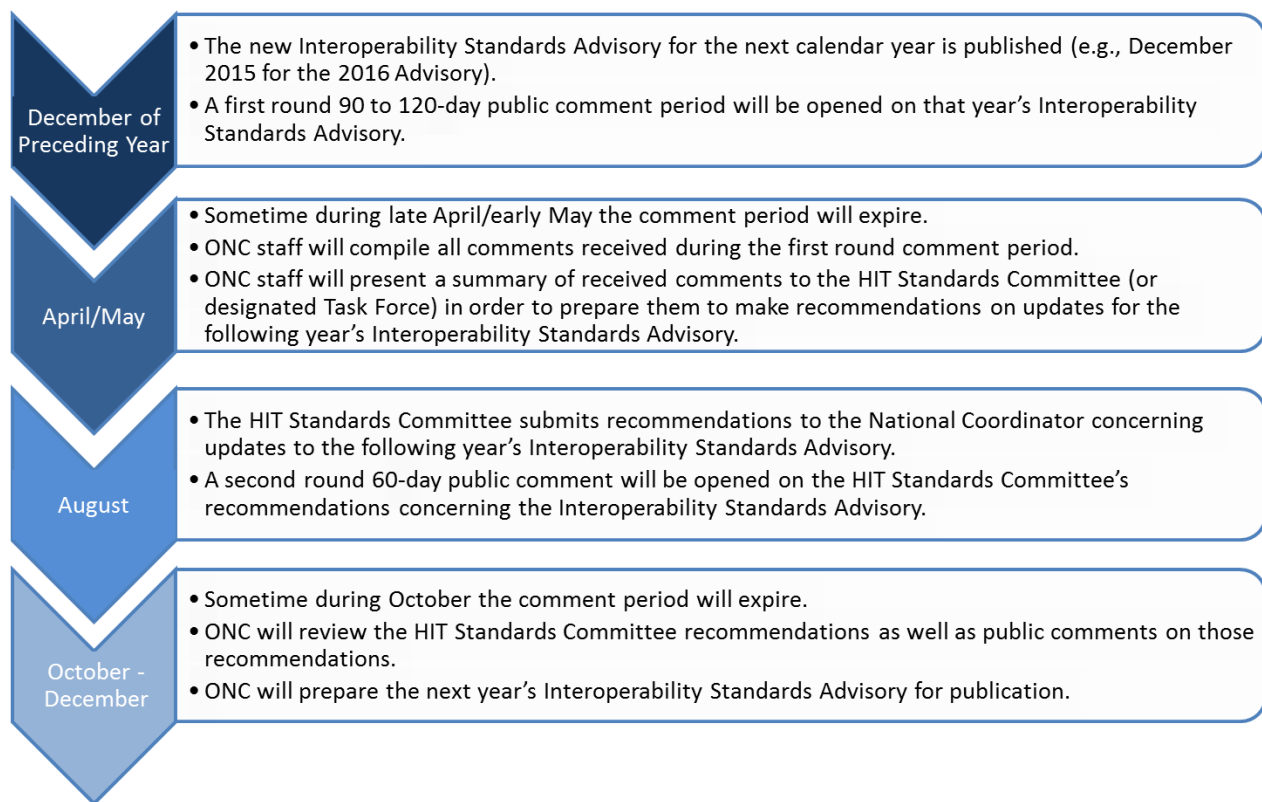
BEST AVAILABLE STANDARDS

When one standard or implementation specification is listed as the "best available," it reflects ONC's initial assessment and prioritization of that standard or implementation specification for a given interoperability purpose. When more than one standard or implementation specification is listed as the best available, it is intended to prompt industry dialogue as to whether one standard or implementation specification is necessary or if the industry and efficiently interoperate more than one.

I. Best Available Vocabulary/Code Set/Terminology Standards and Implementation Specifications (i.e., "semantics")
II. Best Available Content/Structure Standards and Implementation Specifications (i.e., "syntax")
III. Best Available Transport Standards and Implementation Specifications (i.e., the method by which information is moved from point A to point B)
IV. Best Available Standards and Implementation Specifications for Services (i.e., the infrastructure components deployed and used to accomplish specific information exchange objectives)

HOW THE ADVISORY WILL BE UPDATED

The 2015 Advisory is an "open draft" designed to begin an interactive process that will ultimately result in a list of standards and implementation specifications for a broad range of clinical health IT interoperability purposes. ONC expects to annually update the Advisory through a transparent and structured process that includes advice from the HIT Standards Committee (ONC's federal advisory committee) and the public at large. ONC will publish a new Advisory each December for the upcoming calendar year and then initiate the process to update that year's advisory for the next calendar year (e.g., the "2016 Interoperability Standards Advisory" would be published in December 2015 and the process throughout 2016 would yield the 2017 Interoperability Standards Advisory).

December of Preceding Year
- The new Interoperability Standards Advisory for the next calendar year is published (e.g., December 2015 for the 2016 Advisory).
- A first round 90 to 120-day public comment period will be opened on that year's Interoperability Standards Advisory.

April/May
- Sometime during late April/early May the comment period will expire.
- ONC staff will compile all comments received during the first round comment period.
- ONC staff will present a summary of received comments to the HIT Standards Committee (or designated Task Force) in order to prepare them to make recommendations on updates for the following year's Interoperability Standards Advisory.

August
- The HIT Standards Committee submits recommendations to the National Coordinator concerning updates to the following year's Interoperability Standards Advisory.
- A second round 60-day public comment will be opened on the HIT Standards Committee's recommendations concerning the Interoperability Standards Advisory.

October - December
- Sometime during October the comment period will expire.
- ONC will review the HIT Standards Committee recommendations as well as public comments on those recommendations.
- ONC will prepare the next year's Interoperability Standards Advisory for publication.

This Interoperability Standards Advisory represents the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's current thinking and is for informational purposes only. It is non-binding and does not create nor confer any rights or obligations for or on any person or entity.