

CURES ACT FINAL RULE

ONC Clarifications in the Interim Final Rule to Support Native Applications

Changes and Clarifications Related to the ONC Health IT Certification Program



After the May 2020 publication of the Cures Act Final Rule, health IT developers preparing for testing and certification as well as third-party application developers requested that ONC clarify certain requirements in the “Standardized Application Programming Interface (API) for Patient and Population Services” certification criterion (§ 170.315(g)(10)) and the API Conditions of Certification (§ 170.404(a)). ONC addressed many of these comments in updates that were published as part of the November 2020 Interim Final Rule. The updates that are part of the Interim Final Rule include:

- Explanation of how the ONC Health IT Certification Program requirements apply to interactions between OAuth 2.0 authorization servers and a specific type of application, native applications.
- Clarification of technical ambiguity specific to the issuance of refresh tokens to native applications to achieve consistency in the development of certified Health IT.
- Updates to the regulation text throughout the certification criterion and Conditions of Certification for clarity and consistency.



Clarifications for the Standardized API for patient population services criterion ([§ 170.315\(g\)\(10\)](#))

ISSUANCE OF REFRESH TOKENS TO NATIVE APPLICATIONS

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ONC established requirements based on adopted standards and implementation specifications that require Health IT Modules to issue refresh tokens to applications “capable of storing a client secret.” A strict interpretation of the ONC Cures Act Final Rule would exclude native applications that are capable of securely handling a refresh token without needing a client secret.

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In the Interim Final Rule, ONC amended the regulation text, specifying that a Health IT Module’s authorization server must issue a refresh token valid for a period of no less than three months to native applications capable of securing a refresh token. ONC recognizes that there is not a standardized solution specified in the [HL7® SMART App Launch Framework](#) for supporting native applications. As a result, health IT developers have flexibility to implement the HL7® SMART App Launch Framework so long as Certified Health IT Modules support issuance of an initial three-month refresh tokens to native applications capable of securing a refresh token.

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Clarifications for the API Conditions of Certification ([§ 170.404\(a\)](#))

TRANSPARENCY CONDITIONS

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The transparency Conditions of Certification in § 170.404(a)(2) require Certified API Developers to publish specific business and technical documentation necessary to interact with their certified API technology.

INTERIM FINAL RULE

In the Interim Final Rule, ONC clarified that health IT developers must publish the method(s) by which their Health IT Modules support the secure issuance of an initial refresh token to native applications. Also, ONC clarified that health IT developers can determine which method(s) they use to support interactions with native applications and are not required to support all methods that third-party developers seek to use.

OPENNESS AND PRO-COMPETITIVE CONDITIONS

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The openness and pro-competitive Conditions of Certification in § 170.404(a)(4) establish practices that Certified API Developers must follow to enable an open and competitive marketplace.

INTERIM FINAL RULE

In the Interim Final Rule, ONC clarified that application developer attestations to health IT developers regarding the ability of their applications to secure a refresh token, a client secret, or both, must be treated in a good faith manner consistent with the openness and pro-competitive Conditions of Certification in § 170.404(a)(4).