



# Physician's Guide

CCHIT Certification for Ambulatory  
Electronic Health Records | 2006



# You may be ready to invest in electronic health record (EHR) software, but you face challenging questions such as these:

- **With over 200 products in the ambulatory EHR marketplace, how do I begin?**
- **Our physicians can't agree on what must be included in an EHR—is there an authoritative source?**
- **With all the talk of RHIOs and the National Health Information Network, how can we be sure our EHR will be compatible with them?**
- **Everyone is worrying about electronic data and privacy today, so how can we assure the EHR we buy has adequate security?**

**The Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology or CCHIT<sup>SM</sup> was founded with the precise goal of helping you answer these questions. CCHIT is the recognized authority in the United States for certifying EHR products—an independent, nonprofit, public/private organization that sets the benchmark for healthcare information technology.**

The CCHIT certification program can reduce your risk when you select an EHR. CCHIT stays abreast of the new demands that practices face, and ensures that CCHIT Certified<sup>SM</sup> products have the capability of fulfilling those needs. For example, CCHIT Certified products will give you the means to measure and report the quality indicators needed for pay-for-performance incentive programs.

The Commission certifies ambulatory EHRs—those designed to be used in physician offices and clinics—right now. Inpatient EHR certification is planned in 2007, and certification of the networks through which EHRs interoperate is planned in 2008.

We have created this guide to help physicians and practice managers understand the benefits they can expect when EHR products have been certified by CCHIT.

## Look for the CCHIT Certified Seal



**The CCHIT Certified seal assures you that an EHR product meets basic requirements for:**

- Functionality (ability to create and manage electronic records for all of your patients, as well as automate the workflow in your office)
- Interoperability (ability to receive and send electronic data to other entities such as laboratories); and
- Security (ability to keep your patients' information safe)

**Beware of claims that products are "CCHIT-compliant."** Only the CCHIT Certified seal guarantees that products have undergone the rigorous testing required for certification by the Commission.

The list of CCHIT Certified products can be found at [www.cchit.org/cchit-certified](http://www.cchit.org/cchit-certified)

## About CCHIT



**CCHIT was founded by the American Health Information Management Association, the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society and the National Alliance for Health Information Technology.**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded CCHIT a three-year contract to develop and test certification criteria and manage an inspection process for certifying EHRs. At the end of the contract, CCHIT will transition to a self-sustaining certification agency.

CCHIT works in collaboration with the American Health Information Community, the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standard and Technology, and with several other organizations awarded HHS contracts to harmonize standards, develop prototypes for a national health information network architecture, and assess privacy and security laws and practices.

The work of CCHIT has been endorsed by a number of physician professional organizations, including:

- The American Academy of Family Physicians
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
- The American College of Physicians
- Physicians' Foundation for Health Systems Excellence & Physicians' Foundation for Health Systems Innovation

# The Certification Process

## **CCHIT criteria and processes are open and transparent to all.**

As a physician or provider contemplating purchase of an EHR product, you are about to make a substantial investment in a system that you and your colleagues must rely on for a long time—10, 20 years or more. Few practices have the time and resources to evaluate every detail for every potential product of interest. Relying on certification can help with your selection process.

**Companies that apply for CCHIT certification must submit their products to a rigorous inspection process against comprehensive criteria.** A jury of three EHR experts—including at least one practicing physician—observes a carefully scripted product demonstration. This inspection takes a full day and covers four distinct clinical scenarios.

One script, for example, recreates a scenario of a visit by a well child to a primary care physician and checks an EHR's ability to:

- Correctly identify the patient and his parent,
- Document and track immunization history, prescriptions and lab reports, and
- Provide guidelines for prevention and wellness care.

In another scenario, an elderly man with poorly controlled diabetes, hypertension and other chronic conditions visits his doctor, and EHR functions that must be demonstrated include:

- Monitoring potential adverse drug reactions,
- Disease management,
- Treatment plans, and
- Generation of quality improvement reports.

**The precise criteria used, and the test scripts followed, are all available at CCHIT's web site, [www.cchit.org](http://www.cchit.org).** Through this web site, you can also follow the ongoing progress of CCHIT as it enhances the criteria and inspection process for the future.

# What Certification Requires

**The functions and capabilities required for certification by CCHIT for ambulatory EHRs were developed by a broad panel of volunteer experts meeting in multi-disciplinary Work Groups, and approved by the Commissioners.** These criteria have been published on CCHIT's web site. Besides specifying the criteria required in 2006, the criteria documents include a Roadmap forecasting additional criteria to be required in 2007 and 2008. The Roadmap provides guidance to providers and the industry by offering a realistic time table for incremental improvements in EHR systems, and each year the Roadmap will be extended to maintain visibility two years into the future.

**CCHIT has classified some criteria as provisional and some as assignable.**

**Provisional criteria** were tested, but only for the purpose of validating those criteria and test steps for future years. Vendors are not scored on provisional criteria for 2006 certification.

**Assignable criteria** are those which the vendor does not directly control. For example, there is a security requirement that the EHR product create a backup copy of all data. However, some EHR vendors provide this service through a third party. To be characterized as assignable, a vendor must provide documentation that the product feature is provided through a third party.

## Functionality

CCHIT certification for the functionality of an ambulatory EHR—its ability to carry out specific tasks—requires products to meet 263 criteria in the following 41 categories:

Identify and maintain the patient record	Present alerts for disease management, preventive services and wellness
Manage patient demographics	Notifications and reminders for disease management, preventive services and wellness
Manage problem list	Clinical task assignments and routing
Manage medication list	Inter-provider communication
Manage allergy and adverse reaction list	Pharmacy communication
Manage patient history	Provider demographics
Summarize health record	Scheduling
Manage clinical documents and notes	Report generation
Capture external clinical documents	Health record output
Generate and record patient-specific instructions	Encounter management
Order medications	Rules-driven financial and administrative coding assistance
Order diagnostic tests	Eligibility verification and determination of coverage
Manage order sets	Manage practitioner/patient relationships
Manage results	Clinical decision support system guidelines updates
Manage consents and authorizations	Entity authorization
Manage patient advance directives	Enforcement of confidentiality
Support for standard care plans, guidelines and protocols	Data retention, availability and destruction
Capture variances from standard care plans, guidelines and protocols	Audit trail
Support for drug interaction	Extraction of health record information
Support for medication or immunization administration or supply	Concurrent use
Support for non-medication ordering (referrals, care management)	

For specific criteria for each category, visit [www.cchit.org](http://www.cchit.org)

## Security and Reliability

An EHR must protect the privacy of patients' health information while providing secure and reliable access for care providers. To ensure data privacy and prevent data loss, CCHIT requires EHRs to meet 48 criteria in four security categories and three reliability categories:

<b>SECURITY:</b>	<b>RELIABILITY:</b>
Access control	Backup/recovery
Audit	Documentation
Authentication	Technical services
Technical services	

For specific criteria for each category, visit [www.cchit.org](http://www.cchit.org)

## Interoperability

The 27 CCHIT criteria governing certification requirements for interoperability—the ability to exchange data with other systems—require EHRs to be able to receive and transmit information in six categories:

- Laboratory and imaging
- Medications
- Immunizations
- Clinical documentation
- Secondary uses of clinical data
- Administrative and financial data

It is important to note that Interoperability requires the availability of well-defined standards. Because efforts to harmonize standards are just beginning, the first CCHIT Interoperability criteria for Ambulatory EHRs are on the Roadmap to take effect in 2007, not 2006.

For specific criteria for each category, visit [www.cchit.org](http://www.cchit.org)



In selecting an electronic health record (EHR) for your office or clinic, be certain to ask:

Is it certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT)?

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Should we delay an EHR purchase until all future criteria for certification (based on the CCHIT Roadmap) are developed?**

**A:** No. The CCHIT Roadmap is revised annually so there always will be new requirements on the horizon. It also takes time—two years or more—to start-up a new EHR system, collect data and implement a meaningful quality improvement mechanism that can lead to your receiving incentive payments that are built into pay-for-performance and other programs. Those who wait could miss several years of potential incentive payments. Also, in a competitive environment, it will be hard to catch up with medical practices that implemented EHR systems sooner.

**Q: What effect will certification have on innovation and competition in the health information technology (HIT) market place?**

**A:** HIT vendors will compete and innovate beyond the requirements of certification to differentiate their products and make them attractive to potential customers. Certification is not subjective or comparative. It provides a baseline, requiring products to meet basic standards of functionality, security and interoperability, so EHR purchasers have a sound starting point to make more reliable buying decisions.

**Q: Will we pay more for a CCHIT Certified system because of the fees vendors are being charged to have products certified?**

**A:** CCHIT set the price for certification at a reasonable level so all companies—large and small—could participate. Ultimately, we believe the marketplace will set the price for EHR products. In other areas of new technology, when purchase volume goes up with increased adoption, prices go down.

**Q: Small physician practices don't need the same interoperability and security features that larger practices require. Doesn't it make sense for smaller practices to buy less expensive products that don't have to meet the rigorous certification criteria for those features?**

**A:** An EHR is one of the most important purchases a practice will make, regardless of its size. It is a critical business decision that should not be based on cost alone. Physicians in practices of all sizes may want to share information electronically with other physicians, hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories, radiology groups and others. If its EHR does not have the appropriate interoperability and security features, a small practice and its patients will be at a serious disadvantage.

**Q: What if we buy a CCHIT Certified EHR and it doesn't perform as the vendor or CCHIT says it should?**

**A:** Physicians should always turn to their vendor first for resolution of these matters. If an EHR customer has evidence that a product being marketed as CCHIT Certified is not substantially equivalent to the version submitted for testing, CCHIT has a formal process for investigating. You also may request that remedies for false claims of product performance be included in your sales agreement with the vendor.

**Q: How long will the CCHIT Certified designation apply to the system we buy?**

**A:** A product is CCHIT Certified for three years from the testing date as having met the criteria for the year in which it was tested (e.g., "Ambulatory EHR 2006"). However, vendors may wish to re-certify their products annually to keep pace with new criteria.

**Q: Is CCHIT a government agency?**

**A:** No. CCHIT is an independent, private-sector initiative organized as a limited liability corporation. Certification is voluntary. In October 2005, CCHIT was awarded a contract by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The transitional funding from HHS will support certification development, testing, and assessment, after which CCHIT will operate as a self-sustaining nonprofit organization.



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## Buy with Confidence.

**The CCHIT Certified designation is the benchmark for EHR products.**

It is our assurance that your EHR will meet nationally recognized standards and has the features and functions you need to ensure the best in integrated, quality care for your patients.

**For a list of EHRs certified by CCHIT, visit [www.cchit.org/cchit-certified](http://www.cchit.org/cchit-certified)**

Or ask your vendor “When will your product be CCHIT Certified?”