Cerner Quality Reporting 2021 Standards Version Advancement Process (SVAP) Updates

Introduction
As part of our maintaining currency with the most contemporary industry standards for interoperability, Cerner will be releasing updates to eCQM reporting software for both *Cerner Millennium* and Soarian Clinicals clients to support quality measurement standards for 2021 reporting. These updates will be certified with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) through their Standards Version Advancement Process (SVAP).

To help provide background and address questions that may be raised, we have put together the below FAQs. If you have additional questions that are not addressed, please direct them to CernerRegulatoryCompliance@cerner.com.

What is the SVAP?
The Standards Version Advancement Process, or SVAP, is a feature adopted by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) in the 2020 Cures Act final rule – the same regulation which adopted the 2015 CEHRT Cures Update software requirements and information blocking requirements – for their Health IT Certification Program.

Since the ONC's certification program provides the software requirements and associated standards and implementation specifications required to be used by healthcare providers for participation in Centers' for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) programs impacting reimbursement (e.g., Promoting Interoperability and MIPS), the regulations which cite specific standards (and corresponding versions of those standards) can inadvertently limit industry advancement and innovation or create potential compliance conundrums. For example, the Cures Update cites the 2020 version of the CMS Quality Reporting Document Architecture (QRDA) Category I and Category III Implementation Guides for eCQM reporting as the required standard and version for the CQM reporting certification criterion. However, CMS updates their specifications on an annual basis and requires the current year's version for reporting under programs like Inpatient Quality Reporting (IQR) and MIPS Quality Performance Category. Thus, participants (and their certified technology suppliers) have a need to uplift to the new specification version each year. But doing so *could* have potential regulatory compliance implications for CEHRT since uplifting means you would no longer be supporting the specification version cited in regulation. This is the dilemma from which the SVAP was born.

The SVAP is the process through which new versions of adopted standards under the certification program related to interoperability (e.g., the CMS QRDA specifications) are reviewed annually and considered for approval for voluntary certification by certified developers, like Cerner. This means that instead of having to wait for ONC to adopt new versions of interoperability standards via regulation (which generally happens only once every 3-5 years), developers (and their clients) are able to move forward with new versions of standards on a voluntary basis without any risk of regulatory compliance issues. The result is a more flexible regulatory environment which also lends itself to faster adoption of new interoperability-related innovations across the industry.

How does the SVAP work?
Each year in early August, the ONC provides a list of new versions of current adopted interoperability standards and implementation specifications under the program which have been (or are soon to be)

released or published during the current calendar year. These are the new versions of standards that are proposed for adoption under the SVAP for the following calendar year. The ONC then provides the industry with an opportunity to submit public comment on whether each proposed new version should be adopted and made available for voluntary certification. The proposed standards are published at healthit.gov/svap with a tag identifying them as *new version under consideration*.

Public commenting generally closes at the end of September and the ONC reviews comments to come to a decision on which new versions to adopt. In January, those decisions are published and an effective date is applied identifying when certified developers can begin voluntarily certifying to the new versions. You can see the new approved versions for each calendar year on the ONC Health IT Certification Program SVAP page. In the case of the CMS QRDA specifications, we fully expect that each new annual release will be approved under SVAP for the corresponding calendar year moving forward.

How will these updates affect real world interoperability of Cerner's certified eCQM reporting capabilities?
The update to the 2021 version of these QRDA Category I and Category III standards is a necessary step to align with requirements for CMS eCQM reporting programs for 2021. Further, Cerner has always made such updates annually to maintain currency with CMS eCQM reporting programs like Inpatient Quality Reporting (IQR) for Medicare participating hospitals or the Quality domain of CMS's Quality Payment Program (QPP) Merit based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). Therefore, we do not believe these updates will introduce any potential negative impacts to the real-world usability or interoperability of the certified quality reporting capabilities for *Cerner Millennium* or Soarian Clinicals clients.

Will Cerner continue to support the 2020 version of the QRDA standards that is currently certified for eCQM reporting?
Considering that this new version of the QRDA standards is now the only version accepted for 2021 CMS program reporting, previous versions of the standards will no longer be supported for CMS program reporting purposes. However, the previous year's version of the QRDA standards (2020 in this case) will continue to be supported for basic QRDA export and import capabilities.

Does this new process change how annual eCQM submission has been done historically?
In context of eCQM reporting and new versions of CMS QRDA specifications, the SVAP does not change anything for healthcare providers. Uplifting to CMS' new annual specifications for each year's eCQM reporting is a well-established process Cerner has always undertaken for clients participating in such programs as the Inpatient Quality Reporting program for hospitals or the MACRA Quality Payment Program Merit based Incentive Payment System for eligible clinicians, and that will not change. Both *Cerner Millennium* and Soarian Clinicals clients will continue to follow the established processes for uplifting to the new annual QRDA specifications (more details available under the final FAQ below).

The only change is that ONC has now adapted their program to better align with that annual uplift process by enabling developers to explicitly certify for each annual specification version, as opposed to doing so "under the covers" of the certification program with sub-regulatory blessing from ONC.

Does this impact my EHR Certification ID created for CMS program attestations?

No. Once it is completed, the certification for the new 2021 version of the CMS QRDA specifications will be inherited under the existing certified product listings for the *PowerChart (CQMs)* v2015.01 and v2018, *FirstNet (CQMs)* v2015.01 and v2018, and *Soarian Clinicals* v2015 certified health IT modules on the Certified Health IT Product List (CHPL). Accordingly, you should continue to follow normal procedures for obtaining an EHR Certification ID and developer verification letter (no new or special considerations to account for with the SVAP).

Cerner Millennium clients are highly recommended to utilize the Regulatory Central EHR Certification ID Generator tool for producing Certification IDs and submitting verification letter requests. See Generating an Electronic Health Record Certification ID and the *Cerner Millennium* ONC CHPL User Guide for more information and guidance. Soarian Clinicals clients can utilize the Cerner Health Services ONC CHPL User Guide for guidance on the same.

Where can I find more information on Cerner's requirements and process for the new 2021 QRDA specification uplift?
Provided below are the code requirements for the 2021 QRDA specification uplift, along with reference links for more details on the standard process. As mentioned above, the uplift process is consistent with past years for eCQMs (no changes for 2021).

Code requirements for Eligible Clinician *Cerner Millennium* clients (for additional details on uplift process, see Eligible Clinician eSubmission Overview):

- #408668: 2021 Ambulatory Clinical Quality Measures QRDA Import and Export (July 2021)
- #390242: Quality Reporting Document Architecture (QRDA) Import for ECs and EH 2021 (July 2021)

Code requirements for Eligible Hospital *Cerner Millennium* clients (for additional details on uplift process, see Implement Hospital eCQMs):

- #373390: eMeasures Reporting (US): ED Throughput 2021 (June 2021)
- #373394: eMeasures Reporting (US): PC 2021 (June 2021)
- #373472: eMeasures Reporting (US): Stroke 2021 (June 2021)
- #373541: eMeasures Reporting (US): VTE 2021 (June 2021)
- #373543: eMeasures Reporting (US): Safe Use of Opioids 2021 (June 2021)

Code requirements for Soarian Clinicals clients (please reference 2021 Program Requirements and Solution Support Summary for additional details on uplift process):

- Healthcare Intelligence 8.03 SP5 OR Healthcare Intelligence 8.04 SP1 (GA June 18, 2021)