Oracle Cerner Direct Messaging 2022 Standards Version Advancement Process (SVAP) Updates

Introduction

As part of our efforts to maintain currency with the most contemporary industry standards for interoperability, Oracle Cerner has made updates Direct Messaging capabilities for both *Cerner Millennium®* and Soarian Clinicals clients to support the latest version of industry standard DirectTrust™ specifications for secure Direct messaging exchange (Applicability Statement for Secure Health Transport Version 1.3, May 2021). 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 compiled the following 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 ONC in the 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 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 maintains the 1.2 release of the DirectTrust™ specifications (Applicability Statement for Secure Health Transport, Version 1.2, August 2015) as the required standard and version for the Direct messaging capabilities under the certification program. However, DirectTrust™ updates their specifications periodically to maintain best practices for secure data exchange and released such an update in May 2021.

The SVAP is the process through which new versions of adopted standards under the certification program related to interoperability (e.g., the DirectTrust™ specifications) are reviewed annually and considered for approval for voluntary certification by certified developers, like Oracle 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 customers) 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 January, 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 that 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*, and new versions of standards published after January can be dynamically inherited into the review process or recommended by stakeholders via comment.

Public commenting closes in May and ONC reviews comments to come to a decision on which new versions to approve. In June, approved new versions of adopted standards for that year are announced and certified developers can begin voluntarily using those new versions in their certified modules after a 60-day delay period.

You can view 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, the new annual releases for reporting years 2021 and 2022 have been approved and we fully expect that each new release will be approved for each corresponding calendar year moving forward.

How will these updates affect real world interoperability of Oracle Cerner's certified Direct Messaging capabilities?

The update to the 1.3 release of the DirectTrust™ standard aligns our software with the most advanced specifications for secure Direct messaging exchange. The changes for the 1.3 specification version are minor and are fully backwards compatible with Direct messaging Health Information Service Providers (HISPs) utilizing the 1.2 version. Therefore, we do not believe these updates will introduce any potential negative impacts to the real-world usability or interoperability of the certified Direct Messaging capabilities for *Cerner Millennium*® and Soarian Clinicals clients. In fact, these changes further ensure effective and secure exchange of health information.

Will Oracle Cerner continue to support the 1.2 version of the DirectTrust™ standard that is currently certified for Direct Messaging?

As mentioned above, the changes for the 1.3 version of the standard are fully backwards compatible with the 1.2 version. Therefore, while the software will now be supporting the 1.3 version in place of 1.2, all the same minimum requirements for the 1.2 version are satisfied. Furthermore, exchange with other Direct messaging HISPs utilizing the 1.2 version will not be impacted.

Are there any requirements for clients to adopt the uplift to the new DirectTrust™ standards?

No. Since Direct Messaging is a cloud-deployed product the updates have been deployed directly to Production systems by Oracle Cerner without any action required on the part of clients.