

## The Stimulus Bill may help you acquire your Case Management Software

---

In its more than 1,000 pages, the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 signed into law on February 17, 2009, includes important changes for health and human service organizations in addition to providing funds for projects to stimulate the economy. The following aspects of the bill are of immediate importance for the behavioral health and social service field:

- Moratorium on pending Medicaid regulations for case management, provider taxes, and school-based administration and transportation services extended through June 30, 2009
  
- Community mental health centers are eligible for \$1.5 billion in funds for construction, renovation, equipment, and information technology
  
- Centers for Independent Living will receive funding of \$140 million to help people with disabilities continue to live in their communities
  
- IDEA Special Education will receive funding of \$12.2 billion for grants to increase the federal share of special education costs
  
- Head Start and Early Head Start will receive \$2.1 billion to provide comprehensive development services to help children succeed in school

Health information technology, via the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), was a key part of the legislation's focus on health care system improvements. Of the \$20 billion allocated for health care system improvements, \$19 billion was designated for HITECH provisions. As a result of the provisions, **the Congressional Budget Office estimates that approximately 90% of physicians and 70% of hospitals will be using comprehensive electronic health records by 2014.** The HITECH provisions address the need for standards for the electronic exchange and use of health information, training and sharing of best practices for using health information technology. **The HITECH Act also provides incentives and grants to encourage providers to adopt health information technology.** Privacy provisions in the legislation will strengthen privacy protection of electronic health information, prohibit sale of patient medical information without permission of the patient, and prohibit the use of patient medical information for marketing unless the patient grants permission for that use.