



IL-HITREC reaches 1,300 PPCP goal; benefits for patients and providers

A continuing commitment to helping providers reach meaningful use of electronic health records is the focus of the Illinois Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center (IL-HITREC) as it celebrates reaching its target enrollment goal of 1,300 priority primary care providers.

IL-HITREC reached its goal in November, around the same time the national enrollment goal of 100,000 was announced by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC). The 100,000 number represents more than one-third of the primary care providers in the United States.

In addition, IL-HITREC has more than 50% of its providers at Milestone 2—or Go-Live of an EHR. Go-Live consists of the ability to E-Prescribe and produce Quality Reporting.

“The economic impact and advancements in patient care resulting from attainment of IL-HITREC’s 1,300 goal cannot be over-stated,” said John L. Lewis, director of IL-HITREC, based at Northern Illinois University, which administers the grant.

“The \$9 million grant under which IL-HITREC was established will ultimately result in \$65 million in incentives for doctors to implement electronic health records.

“IL-HITREC’s vision is for priority primary care providers to use an electronic health record system in a meaningful way, which will ultimately improve the quality and efficiency of patient care in Illinois,” he added.

This historic commitment to EHR adoption will benefit Americans across the country by increasing the quality, safety and efficiency of their health care. A networked EHR system can give providers more accurate and complete information about patients’ health so they receive the best possible care.

Having a patient’s entire record in one place reduces duplication of service, avoids potential dangerous drug interactions, and allows for more effective diagnosis based on history.

Providers who adopt EHR now will realize the benefits for their patients sooner—and those who participate in Medicare or Medicaid may qualify for financial incentives from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Roger Holloway, IL-HITREC co-director and director of the Northwest Satellite Office, said “The accomplishment of engaging 1,300 providers in Illinois is significant because it will allow patients and providers to make critical progress that will impact access, quality and patient involvement throughout Illinois.

“We look forward to continuing this vitally important service to additional providers throughout the state as we move from a government sponsored program to that of a critical element in the transformation of providers in Illinois from paper to the world of Health Information Technology,” said Holloway.

Primary care providers, in partnership with Regional Extension Centers like IL-HITREC, have taken a major step in transforming health care into an integrated system that enhances the safety and quality of care for patients nationwide.

IL-HITREC has been working with its satellite offices to reach the 1,300 goal since its establishment in 2010 as part of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act; Title IV in Division B of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

IL-HITREC is one of 64 Regional Extension Centers in the U.S designated by ONC. It is a collaboration of several healthcare and educational organizations focused on providing education, outreach and technical assistance to priority primary care providers within Illinois, outside the City of Chicago.

Regional Extension Centers are helping primary care providers overcome the difficulties of EHR implementation. Satellite offices throughout Illinois play a critical role in IL-HITREC's work.

Sharon Miller, project manager of IL-HITREC's Northeast Satellite Office, said "Our office takes great pride in supporting the EHR efforts of our physicians. We were successful in being the first IL-HITREC satellite office to step a provider through Medicare attestation.

"While Medicare/Medicaid attestation is our goal, it has been an even greater pleasure to work with all our physicians and help them through the maze of EHR selection, office assessments and workflow issues. We are pleased that we could be that extra helping hand for their practice," said Miller.

Joy Duling, project manager of the Central Satellite Office, said " Here in the Central Region, we've been advocating for the modernization of healthcare communication for quite some time. It has been exciting to see more than 300 providers in our communities taking advantage of the incentive dollars to do major upgrades to their technology.

"While there's always a learning curve with any new software, we're confident that the steps they are taking now will prepare them for the changes that are coming in the healthcare marketplace" said Duling.

Dan Picard, project manager of the Southern Satellite Office, said, "The REC program is a great opportunity, specifically for the small practice and rural providers who do not have an extended staff with project management or IT support capabilities.

"The opportunity to share my past EHR experiences with those at the beginning of their transition has been rewarding. While it is no mystery that an EHR implementation can be a daunting task, it is always great to see those in their final stages who are starting to reap the benefits of an electronic record," said Picard.

Signed into law by President Obama Feb. 17, 2009, the HITECH Act authorizes CMS to provide a reimbursement incentive for physician and hospital providers who demonstrate the meaningful use of an EHR.

The ARRA stimulus package includes financial incentives for healthcare providers who achieve meaningful use with an EHR. Medicare incentives can provide up to \$44,000 per provider over five years, and Medicaid incentives up to \$63,750 per provider over six years.

To attest to meaningful use, eligible physicians must report numerator, denominator, and exclusion results, if applicable, for the meaningful use objectives and attest that they have successfully met the requirements of the program. Once eligible physicians have successfully completed an online submission through the CMS attestation system, they can qualify for either Medicare or Medicaid EHR incentive payments.

Through the federal grant program, IL-HITREC is limited to assisting 1,300 PCPs. IL-HITREC now has a waiting list program that will allow practices to secure a spot with IL-HITREC, in the event a practice cannot move forward with REC services. For information in your area, visit www.ilhitrec.org or contact info@ilhitrec.org.

How EHRs benefit America's patients & healthcare providers

- **This historic commitment** to EHR adoption will benefit Americans across the country by increasing the quality, safety and efficiency of their health care.
- **A networked EHR system** can give providers more accurate and complete information about patients' health, so they receive the best possible care. Having a patient's entire record in one place reduces duplication of service, avoids potential dangerous drug interactions, and allows for more effective diagnosis based on history.
- **Electronic health records** allow primary care providers to share information and better coordinate patients' care with specialists, hospitals, and other providers.
- **Because electronic health records** are easy to share with patients, they give patients better access to their own health information and empower them to take part in managing their and their families' health care.

How the REC program benefits providers

Health IT plays a critical role in transforming American health care. RECs are using their broad, practical Health IT expertise to help primary care providers, who face unique and complex challenges with EHR adoption, make a smooth transition to their EHR goals.

- **Primary care providers** face unique and complex challenges in EHR adoption, such as constrained resources or having limited IT infrastructure in rural locations.
- **The REC program focuses** on small practices with 10 or fewer physicians, as well as eligible critical access and rural hospitals because they face more financial and staffing challenges than larger practices.
- **Because all primary care practices** are different, RECs gear their support to meet each practice's specific needs – from identifying financial resources to negotiating with vendors to redesigning workflow.
- **RECs provide unbiased support** throughout the EHR process – from start to finish – and provide consistent, long-term support even after the system is up and running.
- **RECs act as a two-way pipeline**, connecting providers to the local and federal Health IT resources they need to achieve their EHRs goals in this changing healthcare landscape.