



Need Help or Information about the EHR Incentive Program?

Dear Oklahoma Physician:

With the new legislation mandating “Electronic Health Record” (EHR) use by 2015, providers everywhere are concerned about where to begin. Hospitals have already increased IT staff and contracted with consultants to help with EHR implementation planning. Larger organizations are allocating resources and gearing up for the change. **But what about private practitioners?**

If you are a small practice, you likely don’t have the staff and technical knowledge typically found in hospitals and large group practices to help you evaluate and implement an EHR—and yet, you’re subject to the same requirements and timelines for EHR adoption as large organizations.

Time IS running out to achieve the milestones required for the financial incentives made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). If you are a Medicaid provider, you could qualify for up to \$21,250 **as early as January 3, 2011** through the “Adopt/Implement/Upgrade” pathway provided by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), the organization leading the charge to drive widespread use of EHRs.

Providers commonly have these questions and concerns:

- **Where do I start?**
- **Do I even qualify for an incentive payment?**
- **And how do I choose the right EHR for my practice, without spending (or wasting) a fortune?**

With literally hundreds of EHR products out there the task of selecting an EHR vendor is daunting. And making the wrong decision can not only be costly, but can directly affect the quality of care provided to your patients. It’s a complex decision, and without a robust knowledge of the EHR marketplace, in-depth technical expertise, and a comprehensive assessment of your practice’s needs, it’s difficult (if not impossible) to choose the right product. Unfortunately that’s what’s happening every day as many practitioners, swayed by vendor presentations, or who have become frustrated and “choose the EHR my friend uses”, end up with an EHR that’s the simply the wrong fit for their practice. And the worst part is—after wasting all that time and money—you have to either suffer with the wrong EHR, or you have to repeat the process all over again! Additionally, many practitioners will be eligible for incentives, but some won’t. Determining your eligibility will impact the timing of your decision to implement your EHR.

- **I can’t afford to hire a consultant!**
- **I don’t have the IT staff or the budget that a hospital does!**
- **I don’t have the time to learn all this on my own!**

Most small practitioners don’t have the resources or funds to research options and purchase and implement an EHR. Even with an ARRA incentive to help with the cost, most simply don’t



have the IT technical expertise to know where to begin, much less get through a successful implementation. Healthcare Information Technology is a complex field, and the associated legislation is thousands of pages long. Larger hospitals typically have more financial resources to staff and hire consultants to help them through these decisions (spending thousands of dollars along the way). Yet for most private practitioners, this is simply not an option.

Fortunately the Oklahoma Foundation for Medical Quality Health Information Technology (OFMQHIT) Regional Extension Center can help healthcare practitioners solve these problems. Part of nationwide Regional Extension Center program funded by the ONC , OFMQHIT provides IT technical, healthcare and business expertise to solo and small group practitioners interested in implementing EHRs.

Our services include:

- **ARRA Incentive Review & “Meaningful Use” Assessment**
- **Practice Assessment**
- **Support for EHR Vendor Selection & Optimization**
- **Project Planning & Vendor Oversight**
- **Go-Live Support & Training**
- **Post Go-Live Practice Assessment & EHR Optimization**
- **IT Security Review & Assessment**
- **Practice Website & Patient Portal**

The Regional Extension Center program is specifically designed to make these services available to smaller practices, so you can benefit from the same type of knowledge and expertise typically available only to large hospitals and physician groups, and at a fraction of their cost.

If you're interested in hearing more about OFMQHIT and our services, and how we can help your office improve its efficiency by implementing the right EHR for your practice, please contact me at the e-mail or phone number below. Visit us online at www.ofmqhit.com.

We are here to help!

Sincerely,

Jonathan Kolarik, RN MBA
Director of Healthcare Information Technology
OFMQHIT Regional Extension Center
Oklahoma Foundation for Medical Quality
ofmqhit@ofmq.com
405-302-3318