

Electronic Health Records “Meaningful Use” Final Rules Announced

In mid-July, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced final rules on the meaningful use of electronic records to help improve Americans’ health, increase safety and reduce health care costs through expanded and effective use of electronic health records (EHR).

Electronic patient health and medical history records are important components of both federal and state health reform efforts, focusing on enhancing quality of care and containing costs.

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is working to ensure the technical infrastructure is in place across Oregon so that every time a patient sees a doctor, his or her medical history will be easily accessed and up-to-date, and records are kept private. The Department of Medical Assistance Programs (DMAP) within the OHA has responsibility for implementing and running the Medicaid incentive payment program. Planning has already started and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) expects that the majority of states will have launched their programs by the summer of 2011.

Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009, eligible health care professionals and hospitals can qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments when they adopt certified EHR technology and use it to achieve specified health objectives.

The Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) is providing support to assist providers across the country in adopting and using in a meaningful way certified EHR technology through a nationwide network of Regional Extension Centers. Oregon is working hard to support providers, consumers and OHA programs so that data can be exchanged in meaningful ways. Here in our state, those providers who need help with meeting meaningful use, beginning with the selection of an EHR system or the assessment of whether a current system needs to be upgraded, should contact O-HITEC, Oregon’s Regional Extension Center, by visiting www.o-hitec.org.

For more information:

A CMS/ONC fact sheet on the rules: www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/

Technical fact sheets on CMS’s final rule: www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/

Technical fact sheet on ONC’s standards and certification criteria final rule is available at www.healthit.hhs.gov/standardsandcertification.