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## HIT Incentive Checks are in the Mail, When Will You Get Yours?

 January 3, 2011 was the first day physicians could register to receive Medicare/Medicaid incentive payments for the adoption of certified electronic health records, and only two days later, health care providers in two different states began receiving their incentive checks in the mail. This bit of news should motivate those physicians who have stayed on the sideline during the past few months.

The adoption of EHR and meaningful use continues to move forward and has been accelerating since the first of the year.

We at the South Florida Regional Extension Center continue to sign up providers from our eight-county region from Key West to Vero Beach. We offer customized, on-the-ground assistance, installation and training, especially for smaller-practice primary care providers and for small hospitals and clinics.

We now have more than 850 who have joined our group and our team members are now performing readiness assessments for those offices and facilities. From that on-site visit, we will provide a tailored report that will suggest certified EHR systems and vendors that will best fit each practice. Providers can then begin the adoption process.

### **Who Qualifies?**

To qualify for incentive payments up to \$44,000 under the Medicare EHR incentive program and up to \$63,750 under Medicaid, eligible professionals must have:

- A National Provider Identifier (NPI)
- An enrollment record in the Provider Enrollment, Chain and Ownership System (PECOS). Note that PECOS enrollment is not required for eligible professionals who participate only in the Medicaid EHR program

### **Registration Does Not Obligate Providers**

There is no cost to sign up with the South Florida Regional Extension Center and remember that registering does not obligate providers to participate in the program. Also, participants are not required to have a have a certified EHR to register. However, if you eventually plan on participating in the incentive program, registering now will expedite the enrollment process and accelerate your journey to meaningful use – and the receipt of your incentive checks.

### **Surveys Show Interest**

Eighty percent of the nation's hospitals and 41 percent of office-based physicians currently intend to take advantage of federal incentive payments for adoption and meaningful use of certified EHR technology, according to survey data by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC). David Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.P., the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, said the survey

numbers represent a reversal of the low interest in EHR adoption in previous years. The data comes from surveys commissioned by ONC and carried out in the course of regular annual surveillance by the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Only 14 percent of respondents said they were not planning to apply for meaningful use incentives. High rates of adoption and meaningful use could result in as much as \$27 billion in incentive payments over 10 years.

Non-hospital-based physicians and other eligible professionals can obtain incentive payments of as much as \$44,000 under Medicare or \$63,750 under Medicaid. Under both Medicare and Medicaid, eligible hospitals may receive millions of dollars for implementing and meaningfully using certified EHR technology.

To qualify for incentive payments, under the Medicare EHR Incentive Program, providers must achieve meaningful use of certified EHR technology, under regulations issued by CMS and ONC. Medicaid providers can receive their first year's incentive payment for adopting, implementing, and upgrading certified EHR technology but must demonstrate meaningful use in subsequent years in order to qualify for additional payments.

South Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report's number one goal is top quality healthcare journalism written and edited for the region's most successful, powerful healthcare business executives and professionals.



Phone : [561-368-6950](tel:561-368-6950)

Fax : [561-368-6978](tel:561-368-6978)

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