



MEDICARE NEWS

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Electronic health records incentives registration starts Jan. 3, 2011

CMS, ONC Outline Resources to Assist Eligible Providers

Today the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) announced the availability of registration for the Medicare and Medicaid electronic health record (EHR) incentive programs. CMS and ONC encouraged broad participation and outlined online and in-person resources that are in place to assist eligible professionals and eligible hospitals who wish to participate.

Beginning Jan. 3, 2011, registration will be available for eligible health care professionals and eligible hospitals who wish to participate in the Medicare EHR incentive program. On January 3, registration in the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program will also be available in Alaska, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. In February, registration will open in California, Missouri, and North Dakota. Other states likely will launch their Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs during the spring and summer of 2011.

“With the start of registration, these landmark programs get underway, and patients, providers, and the nation can begin to enjoy the benefits of widespread adoption of electronic health records,” said CMS Administrator Donald Berwick, MD. “CMS has many resources available to help providers register and participate, and we look forward to working with eligible professionals and eligible hospitals to facilitate the process, beginning on January 3rd and going forward.”

“It’s time to get connected,” said David Blumenthal, MD, MPP, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. “ONC and CMS have worked together over many months to prepare for the startup on January 3rd. ONC’s [Certified HIT Product List](#) includes more than 130 certified EHR systems or modules and is updated frequently. ONC also has hands-on assistance available across the country through 62 [Regional Extension Centers](#). We look forward to continuing to work with CMS to assist eligible providers in 2011 and future years.”

Eligible professionals and eligible hospitals must register in order to participate in the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs. They can do so, starting Jan. 3, 2011, at a registration site maintained by CMS.

To prepare for registration, interested providers should first familiarize themselves with the incentive programs' requirements by visiting CMS' [Official Web Site for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs](#). The site provides general and detailed information on the programs, including tabs on the path to payment, eligibility, meaningful use, certified EHR technology, and frequently asked questions.

CMS announced the following key dates for the Medicare and Medicaid incentive programs' first year:

- Jan. 3, 2011 – Registration for the Medicare EHR incentive program begins.
- Jan. 3, 2011 – States that are ready may launch their incentive programs for Medicaid providers.
- January 2011 – Some state agencies begin issuing Medicaid EHR incentive payments.
- April 2011 – Attestation for the Medicare EHR incentive program begins.
- May 2011 – Issuing of Medicare EHR incentive payments expected to begin.
- July 3, 2011 – Last day for eligible hospitals to begin their 90-day reporting period to demonstrate meaningful use for the Medicare EHR incentive program for federal FY 2011.
- Sept. 30, 2011 – Federal FY 2011 payment year ends at midnight for eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs).
- Oct. 3, 2011 – Last day for eligible professionals to begin their 90-day reporting period for calendar year 2011 to demonstrate meaningful use for the Medicare EHR incentive program.
- Nov. 30, 2011 – Last day for eligible hospitals and CAHs to register and attest to receive an incentive payment for federal fiscal year 2011.
- Dec. 31, 2011 – Calendar 2011 payment year ends for eligible professionals.

Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments will be available to eligible professionals, eligible hospitals, and critical access hospitals (CAHs) when they adopt certified EHR technology and successfully demonstrate “meaningful use” of the technology in ways that improve quality, safety, and effectiveness of patient-centered care.

Professionals who meet the eligibility requirements for both the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs must select which program they wish to participate in when they register. They cannot participate in both programs; however, after receiving payment, they may change their program selection once before 2015. Hospitals that are eligible for both programs can receive payments from both Medicare and Medicaid.

Some states will launch their Medicaid EHR incentive programs beginning Jan. 3, 2011, but most will launch their programs during the spring and summer. Eligible providers with

questions about their state’s launch date should contact their state Medicaid agency. Eligible providers seeking to participate in the Medicaid programs must initiate registration at CMS’ registration site but must complete the process through an eligibility verification site maintained by their state Medicaid agency.

Under the EHR incentive programs, eligible professionals can receive as much as \$44,000 over a five-year period through Medicare. For Medicaid, eligible professionals can receive as much as \$63,750 over six years. Under both Medicare and Medicaid, eligible hospitals may receive millions of dollars for implementing and meaningfully using certified EHR technology.

“The benefits of EHRs are widely recognized, and support for the incentive programs is strong in the health care field and among policymakers,” Dr. Berwick said. “The changeover from paper to electronic records will be challenging for clinicians and hospitals, but CMS and ONC have taken steps to ease the transition. We’ve provided flexibility in meeting the meaningful use requirements, both agencies have conducted extensive outreach, and we have the resources in place to help providers acquire certified EHR technology and meet the programs’ requirements. Immediate registration is not required, but we encourage eligible providers to sign up as soon as they have certified EHR technology and are prepared to participate. We are ready to help.”

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