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Medicare Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Payment Process

Provider Types Affected

This article is intended for Medicare Eligible Professionals (EPs), eligible hospitals, including Medicare Advantage affiliated hospitals, and Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) that are meaningful users of certified Electronic Health Record (EHR) technology.

What You Need to Know

This article describes the payment process for the **Medicare** EHR Incentive Program.

Background

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) of 2009 provides for incentive payments beginning in 2011 for Medicare EPs, eligible hospitals, including Medicare Advantage affiliated hospitals, and CAHs that are meaningful users of certified EHR technology.

NOTE: For information about the **Medicaid** EHR Incentive Program, please see <http://www.cms.gov/EhrIncentivePrograms> on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website. For questions about how Medicaid incentive payments will be made, contact your State Agency. Contact information may be found at https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/Medicaid_StateGuide.pdf on the CMS website.

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Key Points

Who is eligible for the Medicare EHR Incentive Program and how will payments be calculated?

Refer to the following products to determine which providers are eligible and how incentive payments are calculated. Sample payment calculations are provided.

- The “Medicare Electronic Health Record Incentive Program for Eligible Professionals” fact sheet is available at http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CMS_eHR_Tip_Sheet.pdf on the CMS website.
- The “EHR Incentive Program for Medicare Hospitals” fact sheet is available at http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/EHR_TipSheet_Medicare_Hosp.pdf on the CMS website.
- The “EHR Incentive Program for Critical Access Hospitals” fact sheet is available at http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/EHR_TipSheet_CAH.pdf on the CMS website.

What must I do to get a Medicare EHR incentive payment?

- Make sure you're eligible for the Medicare EHR Incentive Program. View eligibility guidelines at http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/15_Eligibility.asp on the CMS website.
- Get registered. Registration is now open. Visit http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/20_RegistrationandAttestation.asp for more details.
- **Use certified EHR technology.** To receive incentive payments, make sure the EHR technology you are using or are considering buying has been certified by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. Visit the Certified EHR Technology Page at http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/25_Certification.asp for more details.
- **Be a Meaningful User.** You have to successfully demonstrate "meaningful use" for a consecutive 90-day period in your first year of participation (and for a full year in each subsequent year) to receive EHR incentive payments. Visit the Meaningful Use Page at http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/30_Meaningful_Use.asp to learn about meaningful use objectives and measures.
- **Attest for incentive payments.** To get your EHR incentive payment, you must attest (legally state) through Medicare's secure Web site that you've demonstrated "meaningful use" with certified EHR technology. You can get to the secure attestation website through the new attestation page available at http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/32_Attestation.asp#TopOfPage on the CMS website. For more information on registration, attestation and meaningful use, go to <http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms> on the CMS website.

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When will I receive a payment?

- Payments will be made approximately 4-8 weeks after the provider successfully attests to meaningful use, assuming the provider has met the allowed charges threshold. For more information, read the FAQ on payment at <https://questions.cms.gov>.
- How will I receive the incentive payment?
- If you are eligible for an incentive payment, the payment will be made to the taxpayer identification number you selected during registration. The payment will be deposited in the first bank account on file with CMS and will be noted as “EHR Incentive Payment” by the bank.
If you receive payments for Medicare services via electronic funds transfer, you will receive your Medicare EHR incentive payment the same way. If you currently receive Medicare payments by paper check, you will also receive your first Medicare EHR incentive payment by paper check.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Medicare Administration Contractors (MACs), carriers, and Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs) will not be making these payments. CMS has contracted with a Payment File Development Contractor to make these payments.

DON'T: Call your MAC/Carrier/FI with questions about your EHR incentive payment.

INSTEAD: Call the EHR Information Center. Contact information and hours of operation are contained in the Additional Information section of this article (see below).

Why is the amount less than I thought?

- The Medicare & Medicaid EHR Incentive Program Registration and Attestation System contains a **Status Tab** at the top which will contain the amount of the incentive payment, the amount of tax or nontax offsets applied, and the adjustment reason code for any reduction. Providers will not receive a remittance advice (835) for this payment; however, an electronic remit (820) will be sent to the bank along with the payment. (See the Additional Information section below for contact information related to the offsets.)
- For those receiving paper checks, there will be a tear off pay stub which identifies offsets made to the incentive payment.

Additional Information

For more information about offsets:

- Call the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) toll-free at 800-829-3903 for tax offsets.
- Call the Department of the Treasury, Financial Management Service (FMS) toll free at 800-304-3107 for nontax offsets.

For other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the EHR Incentive Program, visit <http://www.cms.gov/EhrIncentivePrograms/> on the CMS website.

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The Electronic Health Record (EHR) Information Center is open to assist the EHR provider community with inquiries. **EHR Information Center hours of operation** are 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Central Time) Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. The Center’s toll free number is 1-888-734-6433 (primary number) or 888-734-6563 (TTY number).

To submit an inquiry to the EHR Information Center, visit <https://ehrincentives.cms.gov/hitech/login.action>.

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