

U.S. House and Senate Notification
Wednesday, February 23, 2011

To: Congressional Health Staff

From: Amy Hall, Director, Office of Legislation
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Re: Strong Initial Interest Shown in Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs

In January, more than 21,000 providers initiated registration for the Medicare and Medicaid Electronic Health Records (EHR) Incentive Programs. Eleven states have launched Medicaid EHR incentive programs and four states (Oklahoma, Kentucky, Louisiana and Iowa) reported issuing initial Medicaid incentive payments totaling over \$20 million. This early interest in the Medicare and Medicaid EHR programs reveals strong support for these programs that will advance health care through improvements in patient safety, quality of care, and patient involvement in treatment options.

In addition, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) announced that, more than 45,000 providers requested information or registration help from 62 Regional Extension Centers (RECs). RECs provide hands-on support for providers who want to adopt and become meaningful users of certified EHR technology. Also survey results released by ONC indicate that “four-fifths of the nation’s hospitals, and 41 percent of office-based physicians, intend to sign up for the incentive payments.”

The Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs were established by the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Under HITECH, Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments will be available to eligible professionals, eligible hospitals, and critical access hospitals 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.

Eligible professionals and hospitals must register in order to participate in the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs. Registration opened on Jan. 3, 2011. Additional Medicaid incentive payments are in process. Medicare providers will be able to attest to meaningful use in mid- to late April, and issuance of Medicare payments is scheduled to begin in May.

If you have questions about this announcement, please contact the CMS Office of Legislation.

Thank you.