



EHR Stimulus Funding Update

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In 2009, The Economic Stimulus Act included \$17 billion for incentive payments under Medicare and Medicaid for physicians who adopt Electronic Health Records (EHR). The Act stated physicians, eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals would receive incentive payments of \$44,000 through the Medicare EHR Incentive Program and up to \$63,750 through the Medicaid EHR Incentive program.

The incentives are available per physician over a period of five or six years as they adopt, implement, upgrade or demonstrate meaningful use of the certified EHR technology. The incentives began in 2011 and are scheduled to end in 2016 – the longer a physician waits to apply, the more likely it is he or she will not receive all of the available incentives. Furthermore, physicians who do not implement Electronic Health Records during that time period will be subject to paying penalties.

Maximum EHR Incentive Payments For Medicare Eligible Professionals

In order to receive the maximum EHR incentive payments (\$44,000) as a Medicare-eligible professional, the physician would have had to start participating in 2012. If they begin to participate now, they will receive incentive payments, but the amount will

be reduced. Starting in 2015, if Medicare-eligible professional has not successfully demonstrated meaningful use of the EHR system, they will be subject to a payment reduction between 1-5%.

Maximum EHR Incentive Payments for Medicaid Eligible Professionals

The Medicaid EHR Incentive Program will provide incentives through 2021. If eligible to participate, a physician can participate for six years, non-consecutively if needed. The last year a physician can start participating in the program is 2016. The maximum of \$63,750 is provided to all eligible professionals over six years regardless of when they started, as long it is by 2016.

What is Meaningful Use?

Adopting Electronic Health Records is more than just making the switch to a digital environment. In order to receive the financial incentives, EHRs must be used meaningfully by meeting objectives in three stages. For example, in Stage 1, there are 24 objectives that use EHRs meaningfully. To qualify for incentive payments, eligible professionals must meet at least 19 of these objectives.

How EHR Improves Care and Communication for Your Patients

As a medical professional, you may find the implementation of EHR to be an inconvenience,

but it's important to look at it for the benefits it offers your patients and not as just a list of criteria you plan to meet in order to receive the financial incentives. EHR is more than just capturing patient data electronically, if you put the data to good use. Patients will experience improved care from EHR:

- Doctors are alerted to possible medical conditions or prescription contradictions
- Doctors can easily view the patient's medical history
- Health history of each patient can be transmitted immediately to another doctor
- Doctors are able to see more patients on time
- Patients have access to lab results faster
- Patients can access their health records online to better manage health
- Patients will undergo fewer unnecessary tests



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