



LOUISIANA
HEALTH CARE
QUALITY FORUM

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

CMS ANNOUNCES FINAL RULE FOR STAGE 2 MEANINGFUL USE

BATON ROUGE, LA – (August 23, 2012) – The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) released today the final requirements for Stage 2 of Meaningful Use (MU) in the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Payments Program.

Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, doctors, health care professionals and hospitals can qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments when they adopt and meaningfully use certified EHR technology. More than 120,000 eligible health care providers and more than 3,300 hospitals have qualified to participate in the program and receive an incentive payment since it began in January 2011.

The Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, a private, not-for-profit organization, is the state's designated entity for the administration of the Louisiana Health Information Technology (LHIT) Resource Center, which serves as the state's Regional Extension Center. The LHIT Resource Center is currently working with more than 1,200 health care providers and nearly 30 critical access and rural hospitals as they adopt and meaningfully use EHRs. To date, the Resource Center has assisted providers in applying for and receiving approximately \$26 million in Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive payments.

Nadine Robin, Health Information Technology Program Manager for the Quality Forum, says, "As we move forward, the LHIT Resource Center is poised to continue supporting providers in meeting these new requirements of meaningful use so that they can continue to receive Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments."

The incentive payment program is divided into three stages.

Stage 1 sets the basic functionalities EHRs must include such as capturing data electronically and providing patients with electronic copies of health information.

Stage 2, which will begin as early as 2014, increases health information exchange between providers and promotes patient engagement by giving patients secure online access to their health information.

Stage 3 will continue to expand MU objectives to improve health care outcomes.

The newly released requirements for Stage 2 must be met by hospitals and providers in order to receive incentive payments in the second stage of the program. These requirements ensure that Stage 2 will begin as early as 2014, with no provider required to follow them before 2014. The new rules also outline the certification criteria for the certification of EHR technology so eligible professionals and hospitals may be assured that the systems they use will work, help them meaningfully use health information technology and qualify for incentive payments.

In addition, the new requirements modify the certification program to streamline the process and allow current “2011 Edition Certified EHR Technology” to be used until 2014.

For more information about the LHIT Resource Center and its services, visit www.lhcqf.org. A fact sheet on CMS’s final rule and more information about the EHR incentive program is available at www.cms.gov. A PDF of the rule can be found at www.ofr.gov. To review ONC’s standards, implementation specifications and certification criteria for EHR technology, visit www.healthit.gov.

About the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum

The Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum is a private, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to advancing evidence-based, collaborative initiatives to improve the health of Louisiana residents. Its focus areas include quality measurement and analytics, clinical quality improvement, the patient-centered medical home/care coordination model, outreach/education and health information technology (IT). With regard to health IT, the Forum is the State-Designated Entity to support health care providers and critical access/rural hospitals as they adopt and meaningfully use electronic health records and to lead the planning and implementation of the state’s health information exchange. For more information, visit www.lhcqf.org.

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