



LOUISIANA
HEALTH CARE
QUALITY FORUM

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

GAO: PARTNERING WITH REGIONAL EXTENSION CENTERS INCREASES LIKELIHOOD OF PROVIDER RECEIVING MEDICARE EHR INCENTIVE PAYMENTS

BATON ROUGE, LA.- (Aug. 2, 2012) – Over the past two years, Regional Extension Centers (RECs) across the country have been working with health care providers and hospitals to help them overcome the challenges of adopting and implementing electronic health records (EHRs). To encourage eligible professionals, hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) to adopt and meaningfully use certified EHR technology, Medicare and Medicaid established EHR Incentive Programs.

Recently, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that health care providers who partnered with a REC were more than twice as likely to receive an incentive payment under the Medicare EHR Incentive Program.

The GAO's July 2012 report, *Electronic Health Records: Number and Characteristics of Providers Awarded Medicare Incentive Payments for 2011*, mined 2011 data from a variety of government sources. It offered insights into those providers and hospitals that are making current progress, but could also provide an early indication of those who may be vulnerable to payment reductions in later years of the program.

During the first year, 2,802 hospitals and 141,649 professionals registered for the Medicare incentive program, a required step to receive incentive payments. In 2011, 761 hospitals and 56,585 health care professionals nationwide were awarded more than \$967 million in Medicare EHR incentive payments for their efforts to use EHRs to meaningfully improve patient health.

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 assisting more than 1,400 physicians and nearly 30 critical access and rural hospitals in the adoption and implementation of EHRs to achieve Meaningful Use (MU).

"I'm pleased to see the GAO confirm what providers across Louisiana have already told us – that working with the LHIT Resource Center makes them more successful in achieving meaningful use and makes meaningful use easier to accomplish," says Nadine Robin, Health Information Technology Program Manager for the Quality Forum. "We work side-by-side with providers to help them complete the requirements for receiving incentive payments. Our experience navigating the incentive requirements and assisting with EHR adoption with over 1,400 providers gives our providers a huge advantage."

Professionals who are eligible for the incentives include Doctors of Medicine, Dental Medicine or Surgery, Optometry, Osteopathy and Podiatric Medicine, and Chiropractors. The GAO analysis of Medicare EHR payments to those providers found that:

- In Louisiana, more than five percent of eligible professionals were awarded a Medicare EHR incentive payment in 2011.

- The largest proportion (32 percent) of providers was located in the Southern states, while the lowest percentage (17 percent) was located in the Western states.
- A significant majority (89 percent) of providers were in urban areas.
- Half (50 percent) were specialty practice physicians and more than one-third (38 percent) were general practice physicians.
- Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) did not previously participate in CMS's incentive program for electronic prescribing.

The GAO also analyzed program participation among hospitals, including acute care and critical access hospitals with a variety of ownership type, size and location. Results indicated that:

- In Louisiana, almost 20 percent of eligible hospitals received a Medicare EHR incentive payment.
- Nationally, the median amount of Medicare EHR incentive payments to hospitals was \$1.7 million.
- The largest proportion (44 percent) of hospitals that received a Medicare EHR incentive payment in 2011 was located in the South, with the lowest proportion (12 percent) in the Northeast.

Total potential EHR incentive amounts begin to reduce for Medicare providers who do not attest for meaningful use by the end of 2012. Health care professionals and hospitals in Louisiana are encouraged to take advantage of the guidance, on-the-ground assistance and information available through the LHIT Resource Center.

For more information about LHIT Resource Center services or the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs, visit www.lhcqf.org, email rec@lhcqf.org, or call 225.334.9299.

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 model, outreach/education and health information technology IT. The Quality 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, email info@lhcqf.org or visit www.lhcqf.org.

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