

First Wave of Certified EMRs Announced

The Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT) announced on Friday the first wave of EMR products that have been officially certified under the ONC-ATCB program. CCHIT has tested and certified 33 electronic medical record products (EMRs) that are capable of supporting the stage 1 meaningful use requirements outlined by the ONC.

In order to qualify for incentive payments under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), providers must use certified EMRs. According to CCHIT, 19 of the recently certified EMRs received a complete certification, meaning the entire EMR is capable of meeting all of the stage 1 criteria for either eligible providers or hospitals. The remaining 14 EMRs meet one or more-but not all-of the required stage 1 criteria.

[Click here](#) for a list of the 33 currently certified vendors.

What This Means for Providers

Despite the wave of newly certified EMR systems, providers should keep in mind this is only the first step in a long process. The criteria to demonstrate meaningful use will be developed and rolled out in 3 phases, with each phase adopting more stringent requirements. The meaningful use criteria for phase 1 were finalized in July 2010. Under the Medicare program, a qualifying provider can receive EHR incentive payments for up to five years with payments beginning as early as 2011. However, only payments in 2011 and 2012 will be tied to the stage 1 criteria. As each new phase of meaningful use criteria is developed and rolled out, physicians will need to be able to demonstrate they are meeting each set of requirements in order to continue to qualify for the incentive payments. Stage 2 meaningful use requirements are expected to be finalized sometime in the second quarter of 2011, with providers being required to begin demonstrating meaningful use beginning in October of 2012.

With each new stage of meaningful use criteria, EMR vendors will have to make changes and upgrades to their systems and get re-certified. Providers should keep in mind that even currently certified EMR systems will not necessarily remain certified in the future.

Key Considerations

Providers need to proceed with caution. Because implementing an EMR is expensive, it's something you want to get right the first time. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Anticipate a significant amount of consolidation among the current 500+ EMR vendors. If you settle on a vendor now, will they be around in two years?
- System functionality today is going to be different tomorrow. Vendors will have to re-create their product as they go. Each new stage of meaningful use criteria will require system changes, updates and new functionality you'll have to learn, not to mention possible upgrade costs.

- Don't forget about ICD-10, which is slated to go live October 1, 2013. Not only do EMR vendors have to deal with aggressive timelines to make system changes associated with meaningful use requirements, but they are also rushing to be ready for converting to ICD-10.
- What you are going to be required to demonstrate in terms of meaningful use is still yet to be determined. Until Stage 2 and Stage 3 criteria are clearly defined, physicians won't have any idea what type of commitment they will be taking on in order to qualify for the federal subsidies.

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[Keys to EMR Success – Selecting and Implementing an Electronic Medical Record
Evaluating Computer Systems, Upgrading & EMR](#)