

Electronic health records incentives registration starts Jan. 3, 2011
More Info CMS, ONC Outline Resources to Assist Eligible Providers

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) have announced that registration for the Medicare electronic health record (EHR) incentive program will open Monday, January 3, 2011.

All eligible professionals are required to register in order to participate in the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs. To prepare for registration, physicians should familiarize themselves with the incentive programs' requirements by visiting CMS' official site for the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs. This site provides general and detailed information on the programs, including tabs on the path to payment, eligibility, meaningful use, certified EHR technology, and frequently asked questions.

Under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments will be available to eligible professionals 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. Physicians who meet the eligibility requirements for both the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs must select which program they wish to participate in when they register. Physicians cannot participate in both programs; however, after receiving payment, they may change their program selection once before 2015. Under the EHR incentive programs, eligible professionals can receive as much as \$44,000 over a five-year period through Medicare. For Medicaid, eligible professionals can receive as much as \$63,750 over six years.

CMS and ONC also announced that on January 3 registration for the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program will be available in Alaska, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. In February, registration for the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program will open in California, Missouri, and North Dakota. Other states likely will launch their Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs during the spring and summer of 2011. The AOA will provide information on additional state programs as it becomes available. Physicians who choose to participate in the Medicaid incentive program must initiate registration at CMS' registration site and they must complete eligibility verification with their state Medicaid agency. Physicians participating in the Medicaid incentive program are encouraged to contact their state Medicaid agency for additional details on registration.

The following are a list of key dates provided by CMS and ONC:

- Jan. 3, 2011 – Registration for the Medicare EHR incentive program begins.
- Jan. 3, 2011 – States that are ready may launch their incentive programs for Medicaid providers.
- January 2011 – Some state agencies begin issuing Medicaid EHR incentive payments.
- April 2011 – Attestation for the Medicare EHR incentive program begins.
- May 2011 – Issuing of Medicare EHR incentive payments expected to begin.
- July 3, 2011 – Last day for eligible hospitals to begin their 90-day reporting period to demonstrate meaningful use for the Medicare EHR incentive program for federal FY 2011.

Sept. 30, 2011 – Federal FY 2011 payment year ends at midnight for eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs).

Oct. 3, 2011 – Last day for eligible professionals to begin their 90-day reporting period for calendar year 2011 to demonstrate meaningful use for the Medicare EHR incentive program.

Nov. 30, 2011 – Last day for eligible hospitals and CAHs to register and attest to receive an incentive payment for federal fiscal year 2011.

Dec. 31, 2011 – Calendar 2011 payment year ends for eligible professionals.