

## RHODE ISLAND QUALITY INSTITUTE APPLAUDS FEDERAL MEANINGFUL USE CRITERIA

### *RIQI'S Regional Extension Center providing no-cost services to help priority healthcare providers achieve meaningful use of EHRs*

**PROVIDENCE, RI, JULY 14, 2010**—The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) today applauded the final regulations for meaningful use of certified electronic medical records (EHRs) issued by the federal government. The regulations will allow eligible health care professionals and hospitals to qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments when they adopt certified EHR technology and use it to achieve specified objectives designed to improve health care quality, safety, and efficiency.

RIQI operates the Rhode Island Regional Extension Center (RI REC)—a local, vendor-neutral service funded through a federal grant—to help providers throughout the state navigate all the decisions related to EHR adoption and achieve successful implementation and optimization of health information technology (HIT).

“Achieving meaningful use of EHRs will help physicians improve health outcomes for their patients and achieve workflow and administrative efficiencies,” said Laura Adams, president and CEO, RIQI. “This is particularly important here in Rhode Island, where the majority of physicians are solo practitioners in small practice settings, and often face many barriers to successful adoption and meaningful use.”

Meaningful use of health information technology (HIT) has been proven to improve healthcare quality, prevent medical errors, increase the efficiency of care provision, reduce unnecessary costs and improve population health. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) officially defines a practice that achieves meaningful use of HIT as one which electronically captures health information in a standardized, coded format, uses that information to track and manage key clinical conditions, coordinates care by communicating that information, and reports clinical quality measures and public health information.

“With the publication of the final rule, physicians now know what they need to do in order to qualify for federal funds to promote EHR adoption,” said Yul Ejnes, MD, FACP, a Cranston-based general internist in private practice who is also vice chair of RIQI Board of Directors & chair-elect of the American College of Physicians Board of Regents. “These incentives range from \$44,000 to over \$60,000. The meaningful use criteria in the final rule offer more flexibility in meeting the criteria than the earlier versions and should make it easier for physicians with a certified EHR to qualify for the incentives.”

The two regulations released by the federal government define the “meaningful use” objectives that providers must meet to qualify for bonus payment and identify the technical capabilities required for certified EHR technology.

- [Incentive Program for Electronic Health Records](#): Issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), this final rule defines the minimum requirements that providers must meet through their use of certified EHR technology in order to qualify for the payments.
- [Standards and Certification Criteria for Electronic Health Records](#): Issued by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, this rule identifies the standards and certification criteria for the certification of EHR technology, so eligible professionals and hospitals may be assured that the systems they adopt are capable of performing the required functions.

“In last year’s Recovery Act, President Obama and this Congress made a historic investment in health information technology, said U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). “This investment will save lives, improve quality of care, and reap significant savings by increasing efficiency. The rule unveiled today by Dr. David Blumenthal, our National HIT Coordinator, will ensure that federal HIT funds are both distributed broadly to providers nationwide, and spent wisely, rewarding those who work hard to integrate HIT. I thank those at ONC, CMS and HHS who worked so hard to get this important standard right.”

The RI REC along with **currentcare**—RI’s “Statewide Health Information Exchange—are building the foundation for meaningful use of health IT needed for continual improvement in the quality, safety, and value of care throughout the state. The Rhode Island Regional Extension Center (RI REC) is now open and providing services to more than 130 priority healthcare providers transform their practice through meaningful use of electronic health records (EHRs). The RI REC expects to assist more than 1000 providers in Rhode Island over the next two years.

There is NO COST to enroll in the RI REC for providers that meet the federal standard for priority primary care physicians such as individual and small group practices (10 or fewer primary care providers), public and critical-access hospitals, community health centers and rural health clinics, and any other primary care settings that serve uninsured, underinsured or medically underserved populations.

Services provided through the RI REC include:

- Up to \$2,500 in subsidies
- Decreased vendors costs through negotiated discounts
- Direct, individualized, on-site support
- Access to a qualified marketplace of vendors
- Best practices for using EHR technology to support and improve the care process and reduce risk of adoption

Physicians interested in becoming a member of the RI REC can go to [DocEHRTalk.org](http://DocEHRTalk.org) to learn more about the program and enroll. [DocEHRTalk.org](http://DocEHRTalk.org) provides a portal to the program and serves as a community forum for physicians and other care providers to share insights on EHR adoption and improved quality of care. The site will soon provide a list of pre-approved vendors as well as updates on major state and federal initiatives and policies that impact patient care activities.

Once a physician enrolls, he or she is paired with a designated Process Manager, who provides objective one-on-one support. The RI REC also provides members with a cost benefit calculator to help providers determine if they are achieving meaningful use and qualify for federal, state, and payer incentives.

“Our goal is to get physicians to meaningful use as quickly as possible so that providers and patients throughout Rhode Island can begin to benefit from the quality, efficiency and safety improvements that will be achieved,” said Adams. “Federal leadership and support for advancing Health IT initiatives at the state level is critically important to the future of Rhode Island’s healthcare system and our economy.”

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#### **About The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI)**

The Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) is a statewide collaboration of hospitals, physicians, nurses, health insurers, consumers, business, government and academia working together to significantly improve health care in Rhode Island. Founded in 2001, the RIQI’s strategic focus includes building a statewide health care information exchange and ensuring the adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHRs) as a foundation for continual improvement in the quality of care. The RIQI is leveraging RI’s unique characteristics (small size, line of sight trust, and governmental accessibility) to demonstrate how the health care system can be improved through collaborative innovation. For more information, visit [www.rigi.org](http://www.rigi.org).

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kevin Gould  
401-487-2152  
[kgould@advocacysolutionsllc.com](mailto:kgould@advocacysolutionsllc.com)