

Frequently Asked Questions

Qualifying for reimbursement payments for Electronic Health Records (EHR)

Under the Medicare and Medicaid from Title XIII of
the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (February 17, 2009)

Q In a nutshell, what does the bill mean to the typical chiropractor?

A Chiropractors who comply with the conditions of implementation and “meaningful use” of certified Electronic Medical/Health Record solutions can receive grants of up to \$44,000 per chiropractor paid as “bonuses” to their Medicare reimbursements.

Q How much in Medicare reimbursements do I need to file to receive a maximum grant?

A Just \$24,000 a year in Medicare reimbursements will deliver a maximum annual grant payment under the government plan. For a Chiropractor collecting an average of \$20 per Medicare patient visit that is just 1,200 annual visits or 5 Medicare visits a day.

Q Can a physician be penalized for not utilizing an EHR by 2015?

A If eligible professionals have not implemented and used a certified solution by 2015 their Medicare payments will be reduced by 1% in 2015; 2% in 2016; and 3% in 2017. Penalties could reach 4% or even 5% if fewer than 75 percent of eligible professionals have not adopted EHR solutions by 2018.

Q When would I become eligible and what is the time line for payments under Medicare?

A Payments begin in 2011 and continue on a diminishing scale through 2015. Doctors who adopt systems later will only be paid from that year through 2015.

Q My group has three chiropractors. Can each chiropractor qualify for incentive payments of up to \$44,000 each under the Medicare incentive program?

A Yes, as long as each doctor demonstrates “meaningful use” of a “certified” solution and reaches the eligible amount of Medicare reimbursements.

Q Must doctors institute the incentive bonus payment process or will vendors be doing that for them?

A Doctors will manage the process. The exact procedure is still to be defined by the government Centers of Medicare & Medicaid. The software vendor is not involved with the process.

Q Is “Meaningful Use” defined in the legislation?

A The initial rules from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) state a physician must use a certified EHR software product for Medicare claims for at least three months in the first year of adoption and for a full twelve months in subsequent years. The application for stimulus dollars in the first year will consist of a personal affidavit that the physician is using the EHR software. CMS will change and expand the rules over the next year.

Q Will my patients or the public know whether or not my practice qualifies as a meaningful EHR user?

A If you feel that this is of benefit to you in your relationships with them, you can certainly make that known. In fact, it is about your compensation, and that should be between you and the government.

Q My practice has been utilizing an EHR system since prior to the date the Stimulus Bill was signed into law. Can the providers in my practice still qualify for the incentive payments?

A If the solution can be certified as compliant with the Act's standards, the answer will be yes. You should contact your solution provider.

Q The cost of my EHR system was only \$15,000. If I qualify, will my incentive payment be limited to \$15,000 under the Medicare Plan?

A No. Under the Medicare plan, the payments are unrelated to the purchase price of your solution. They are instead related to the amount of your Medicare reimbursements. Under Medicare the maximum grant is \$44,000 over a five year period.

Q My practice does not currently utilize an EHR. When is the right time to start planning for an EHR implementation?

A Now. Buy your solution for its own value. The stimulus payments are a bonus, but if you're not prepared, your bonus could be delayed and the amount you receive less than if you had acted earlier.

Q Is there any benefit for early adoption of the certified EHR system?

A Sure. While the HITECH program is intended to reduce healthcare administrative and management under Medicare, the value of the technology is inherent, enabling users to streamline their operations, effect efficiencies, deliver better service, cut costs and manage their billings and collections to maximum advantage. Every kind of business enterprise benefits from technology; chiropractic is no exception.

Q Why shouldn't I wait to purchase an EMR system?

A There are several sound reasons: Winning the maximum in stimulus dollars requires you to show meaningful use by the time reimbursement dollars become available; but if you wait, you are simply delaying the opportunity to establish a more streamlined, efficient, cost-effective and more remunerative practice.

- EHR vendors expect to be busy managing many implementations so do not get stuck in a schedule timeline.
- Government grant dollars are limited: once given out, there is no more. If you wait, the well may be dry.

Practically speaking, an EMR/EHR solution is NOT about stimulus dollars. It is about working better, smarter, more productively and that makes sense with or without the stimulus program.

Contact us for more information!

For more details on the EHR Stimulus program and how you can use ACOM Health's RAPID EHR Complete Certified software to get ready for it.

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