

News Release

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
News Division

202-690-6343
media@hhs.gov
www.hhs.gov/news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 17, 2012

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announces major progress in doctors, hospital use of health information technology

Kansas City, MO – Today, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the number of hospitals using health information technology (IT) has more than doubled in the last two years. She also announced new data showing nearly 2,000 hospitals and more than 41,000 doctors have received \$3.1 billion in incentive payments for ensuring meaningful use of health IT, particularly certified Electronic Health Records (EHR).

Secretary Sebelius is in Kansas City, Missouri visiting Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley Health Science Institute to make this announcement and discuss the growth of professional jobs in the health information technology field.

"Health IT is the foundation for a truly 21st century health system where we pay for the right care, not just more care," said Secretary Sebelius. "Health care professionals and hospitals are taking advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to begin using smarter, new technology that improves care and creates the jobs we need for an economy built to last."

Today's announcement details information from a new survey conducted by the American Hospital Association and reported by the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT which found that the percentage of U.S. hospitals that had adopted EHRs has more than doubled from 16 to 35 percent between 2009 and 2011. And, 85 percent of hospitals now report that by 2015 they intend to take advantage of the incentive payments made available through the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs.

The announcement also highlights new data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) detailing \$3.12 billion in incentive payments the agency has made to physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers who have started to meaningfully use EHRs to improve the quality of patient care. In January alone, CMS provided \$519 million to eligible providers. EHR incentive payments can total as much as \$44,000 under the Medicare EHR Incentive Program and \$63,750 under the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of health IT jobs across the country is expected to increase by 20 percent from 2008 to 2018, a pace much faster than the average for all occupations through 2018. In conjunction with her announcement today, Secretary Sebelius will tour the Penn Valley Community College Health Science Institute, which trains students for careers in this growing industry. She will also participate in a roundtable discussion with Community College leaders, students training in the health IT field, health care providers, patients and area employers about the importance of health information technology training in both improving patient outcomes and creating jobs.

The Obama administration provides financial support to eligible health care professionals and hospitals to make the switch to health IT and certified EHRs through the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive

Programs. These programs are funded by the HITECH Act provisions of the 2009 Recovery Act. The administration has also created a nationwide network of 62 Regional Extension Centers to provide technical guidance and resources to help eligible health care providers participate in the EHR Incentive Programs and meaningfully use certified EHRs.

To meet the demand for workers with health IT experience and training, the Obama Administration has also launched four workforce training programs. Training is provided through 82 community colleges and nine universities nationwide. As of January 2012, over 9,000 community college students have been trained for health IT careers and another 8,706 students have enrolled. And as of February 2012, participating universities have enrolled over 1,200 students and graduated nearly 600 post-graduate and masters-level health IT professionals, with over 1,700 expected to graduate by the summer of 2013.

Two other workforce training programs have resulted in the development of a health IT workforce curriculum and a health IT worker competency examination. The health IT workforce curriculum offers colleges and universities in all 50 states innovative health IT teaching materials at no cost to instructors. And, since its release in May, 2011, over 2,000 individuals have taken the HIT Pro Exam, a competency examination designed to show employers that job-seekers have attained a proficient level of knowledge and skills in health IT.

Health IT can help keep information private and secure. In addition, federal laws require key persons and organizations that handle health information to have policies and security safeguards in place to protect health information—whether it is stored on paper or electronically. For more information on how health IT can lead to safer, better, and more efficient care, visit <http://www.healthit.gov/>

For more information about the Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs, see <http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms>

For more information about the HHS Recovery Act health IT programs see http://www.hhs.gov/recovery/announcements/by_topic.html#hit

###