

New “Regional Extension Center” (REC) offers doctors free, practical help with EHRs

The federally funded Rhode Island Regional Extension Center (RI REC), a new function of the Rhode Island Quality Institute, wants physicians to know that it is open for business. That business is putting millions of new federal dollars to work in Rhode Island to help “priority primary care physicians” achieve “meaningful use” of electronic health records (EHRs). The RI REC is a vendor-neutral resource.

The REC’s definition of “priority primary care physician” includes solo physicians and small group practices of ten or fewer primary care professionals, community health centers, rural health clinics, public and critical-access hospitals, and any other primary care settings that serve uninsured, underinsured or medically underserved populations.

Those who meet the federal definition of “priority primary care physician” incur no cost to enroll for REC services.

The Rhode Island REC provides the following services to medical practices:

- Subsidies of up to \$2,500
- Direct, individualized, on-site support
- Access to a pre-screened marketplace of approved vendors
- Pre-negotiated discounts from vendors
- Advice on best practices for efficient adoption and use of EHR technology for consistently optimal patient care

The RI REC portal is DocEHRtalk.org. The REC is ready to provide interested medical practices with a Process Manager who can offer unbiased, individualized support in moving the practice toward “meaningful use.” DocEHRtalk.org provides a list of REC-approved, pre-qualified vendors as well as updates on relevant state and federal initiatives.

The REC’s services include helping practices measure and document their progress toward “meaningful use” to help them qualify for federal, state, and payer incentives.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) define “meaningful use” of health information technology (HIT) as capturing health information in a standardized, coded format; using that information to track and manage key clinical conditions; coordinating care by communicating that information; and reporting clinical quality measures and public health information electronically. ❖

Useful links for practice management and health information technology

From the AMA

www.ama-assn.org/go/pmalerts Physicians and their office staff should sign up through this link for email alerts from the Practice Management Center of the AMA, with timely information on unfair payer practices, tips on addressing them, and new practice management resources and tools.

www.ama-assn.org/go/pmsoftware The Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) collaborated to develop a new online toolkit, which is free to members. The toolkit, “Selecting a Practice Management System,” helps you select and purchase the most appropriate software for your practice. The toolkit resources include:

- A five-step guide to practice management system software selection.
- A comprehensive checklist that helps you determine which practice management system software features and functionalities are essential to your practice and which will enhance your revenue cycle management.
- A sample “request for proposal” that you can employ in your communications with practice management system software vendors.

www.ama-assn.org/go/ucrsettlement Last year’s massive UnitedHealthcare settlement made \$350 million available to compensate physicians for underpayments received for out-of-network services provided between 1994 and 2009. This link is a key to submitting a claim, which physicians must do by October 5, 2010. (See related article on back page.)

From the Rhode Island Quality Institute

www.docEHRtalk.org is the portal for Rhode Island’s new federally funded Regional Extension Center (REC), a function of the Rhode Island Quality Institute and a resource for primary care physicians in achieving “meaningful use” of health information technology. (See related article on the new Rhode Island REC in the column to the left.)

From the U.S. government

www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/ This is the official CMS website for the Medicare & Medicaid EHR (Electronic Health Records) Incentive Programs – who is eligible for the programs, how to register, “meaningful use,” upcoming EHR training and events, etc.

www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/06/20100618d.html provides information on the recently issued “final rule” on temporary certification for EHR (Electronic Health Record) technology from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC). ❖