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**HHS ANNOUNCES FINAL RULES TO SUPPORT MEANINGFUL USE OF  
ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS**

*The Massachusetts eHealth Institute to advise Massachusetts health care providers on making electronic health records a reality*

BOSTON, MA – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently announced final rules to help improve Americans' health, increase safety and reduce health care costs through the expanded use of electronic health records (EHR).

The Massachusetts e-Health Institute ([MeHI](#)), a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, is one of 60 Regional Extension Centers around the country, designated to offer health care providers a local resource for technical assistance, guidance, and information on best practices to support and accelerate health care provider efforts to become meaningful users of EHR.

“For years, health policy leaders on both sides of the aisle have urged adoption of electronic health records throughout our health care system to improve quality of care and ultimately lower costs,” Secretary Sebelius said. “With the leadership of the President and the Congress, we are making that goal a reality.”

Governor Patrick has made the statewide implementation of electronic health records a priority for his Administration. EHR is an important component of the Administration's efforts to address escalating health care costs. Massachusetts companies are also leaders in health care information technology, and the national push to implement EHR technology will create jobs statewide. As part of his support for EHR, Governor Patrick hosted a national conference on health IT in April, where Dr.

David Blumenthal, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, spoke to health IT leaders from more than 30 states.

“This is an important step toward creating a truly integrated health care delivery system in the Commonwealth,” said Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, who chairs the state’s HIT Council.

"As a global leader in technology and innovation, Massachusetts is home to world-renown academic institutions and industries that are pivotal in fostering the state’s e-health sector," Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said. "The Massachusetts e-Health Institute is an important resource for physicians, hospitals and other providers across the state as they adopt EHR and other life-saving technologies."

Established under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009, eligible health care professionals and hospitals can qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments when they adopt certified EHR technology and use it to achieve specified objectives. One of the two regulations announced this week defines the “meaningful use” objectives that providers must meet to qualify for the bonus payments, and the other regulation identifies the technical capabilities required for certified EHR technology.

With “meaningful use” definitions in place, MeHI will be working with primary care providers and their practices to ensure that the EHR system they acquire will support achievement of “meaningful use” objectives. The new guidelines are part of a concentrated five-year national initiative to adopt and use electronic records in health care.

“The Massachusetts Regional Extension Center provides technical assistance, guidance and information on best practices for all health care providers to advance the rapid adoption and use of health IT, “said Bethany Gilboard, Director of Health Technologies and Education and Outreach Coordinator for MeHI. “We support the unique challenges facing today’s health care provider and serve as a trusted advisor, offering national insight and local expertise.”

Two companion final rules were also announced this week. One regulation, issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), defines the minimum requirements that providers must meet through their use of certified EHR technology in order to qualify for the payments. The other rule, issued by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), 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.

The CMS rule announced this week, finalizes a proposed rule issued on January 13, 2010. The final rule includes modifications that address stakeholder concerns, while retaining the intent and structure of the incentive programs. In particular, while the proposed rule called on eligible professionals to meet 25 requirements (23 for hospitals) in their use of EHRs, the final rule divides the requirements into a “core” group of requirements that must be met, plus an additional “menu” of procedures from which providers may choose. This “two track” approach ensures that the most basic elements of meaningful EHR use will be met by all providers qualifying for incentive payments, while at the same time allowing latitude in other areas to reflect providers’ needs and their individual path to full EHR use.

“Health care is finally making the technology advances that other sectors of our economy began to undertake years ago,” Dr. Blumenthal said. “These changes will be challenging for clinicians and hospitals, but the time has come to act. Adoption and meaningful use of EHRs will help providers deliver better and more effective care, and the benefits for patients and providers alike will grow rapidly over time.”

### **About the Massachusetts eHealth Institute**

The Massachusetts e-Health Institute (MeHI) is the state's entity for health care innovation, technology and competitiveness. Established by [an act of the Massachusetts Legislature](#), MeHI is responsible for advancing the dissemination of health information technology across the Commonwealth, including the deployment of electronic health records systems in all health care provider settings that are networked through a statewide health information exchange.

For more information on MeHI go to <http://www.maehi.org>

For additional information about the Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers, see <http://HealthIT.hhs.gov/programs/REC/>.

### **Additional Resources**

A CMS/ONC fact sheet on the rules is available at <http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/>

Technical fact sheets on CMS’s final rule are available at <http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/>

A technical fact sheet on ONC’s standards and certification criteria final rule is available at <http://healthit.hhs.gov/standardsandcertification>.

The final rules are available at:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2010-7207\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2010-7207_PI.pdf)

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2010-17210\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2010-17210_PI.pdf)