

NEWS RELEASE

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State's Rural Health Providers Eagerly Await Electronic Health Records Rule

Denver, CO -- July 12, 2010 – Colorado's rural health providers, along with other healthcare providers nationally, are eagerly awaiting the expected release of the "meaningful use" rules from the federal government. The rules will finalize and clarify which providers are eligible for incentive funding, and define what criteria Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems have to meet in order to be reimbursed for some of the purchase costs by the government.

Implementation of EHR systems has become so critical for health care providers, and for many rural providers the incentive funding will be essential in order to be able to afford adopting technology. Figures vary, but generally it is understood that less than one-third of Colorado providers currently have EHR systems. The remaining two-thirds of providers are focused on getting the systems, but have to overcome financial and technological barriers to make that happen. This challenge is heightened among rural providers who often struggle to find the professional expertise needed for EHR adoption.

"The Colorado Rural Health Center is committed to supporting our members in achieving meaningful use of EHR which will provide funding to many of Colorado's most resource-strapped rural health providers," said Lou Ann Wilroy, executive director for the Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC). Through their proactive advocacy and support efforts on behalf of Colorado rural health providers, CRHC is focusing on ensuring that providers are eligible for resources to successfully implement EHR systems to improve business processes and achieve high quality of care outcomes.

The meaningful use rules, expected to be released very soon, will provide detailed information regarding the functionality requirements EHR systems must be able to accomplish in order for providers to receive incentive funding. With the availability of these rules, CRHC's Technology for Healthcare Excellence (THE) Consortium will educate its members on the final rule through monthly Webinars.

"Through support from THE Consortium, providers and hospitals can rest assured that they are making sound business decisions that will have a positive impact on their ability to engage and support staff and provide the highest quality of care possible," Wilroy said. CRHC will be able to directly assist clinics and hospitals as a sub-contract recipient of the federal Regional Extension Center funding.

Over 25 rural hospitals, rural and safety net clinics and Critical Access Hospitals are currently participating in THE Consortium. Providers are welcome to join, and clinics affiliated with CRHC partner organizations including ClinicNET, are also encouraged to participate. For more information on THE Consortium, please contact cf@coruralhealth.org.

About The Colorado Rural Health Center

CRHC was founded in 1991 as Colorado's nonprofit State Office of Rural Health. CRHC works with Federal, state and local partners to offer services and resources to rural healthcare providers, facilities and communities. CRHC has a diverse and inclusive statewide constituency of over 3,500 people and organizations. For more on the Colorado Rural Health Center call 303-832-7493 or go to www.coruralhealth.org.

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