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HHS AWARDS \$10.9 M IN RECOVERY ACT FUNDS FOR THE RURAL AND NORTH FLORIDA REGIONAL EXTENSION CENTER

Cooperative Agreement Will Assist Providers to Achieve "Meaningful Use" of Electronic Health Records

St. Petersburg, FL - April 8, 2010: A [collaboration](#) of nonprofits serving primary care providers in Florida has been selected for Regional Center funding by HHS' Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (*the ONC*). Led by Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc. (*CHCA*), the [Rural and North Florida Regional Extension Center \(RNFREC\)](#) will help physicians, nurses, and other health professionals achieve "meaningful use" of health information technology (*HIT*) by 2014.



"We are thrilled to have been selected, and are anxious to have the final contracts in place with the ONC to launch educational programs to the nearly 1,000 providers who have already expressed their interest in participating," says Diane Gaddis, CEO & President of CHCA. "We will also be providing direct technical support to help providers, no matter what stage of HIT adoption they may be in, to reach the milestones and goals set under the President's ambitious plan."

CHCA is working closely with leaders from public health, institutions of higher learning, provider networks, regional health information exchanges, and other nonprofit organizations serving predominantly rural, low-income, and medically underserved areas of Florida.

The RNFREC will focus on clinicians providing primary care in public and critical access hospitals, community health centers, and other settings that predominantly serve uninsured and underinsured patients. The [proposed service area](#) includes 39 counties spanning North Florida and the Southwest Coast.

A menu of technical assistance will be available, such as:

- Understanding final meaningful use criteria;
- Assistance selecting and contracting for a certified EHR product that offers the best value for a providers' needs;
- Achieving effective implementation of a certified EHR product;
- Enhancing clinical and administrative workflows to optimally leverage an EHR system's potential to improve quality and value of care, including patient experience as well as outcome of care; and
- Functional health information exchange.

CHCA and the RNFREC join three additional projects designed to ensure providers in every Florida county have access to support. The University of Central Florida (Orlando), the University of South Florida (Tampa), and Health Choice Network (Miami) were also chosen as Regional Centers.

Diane adds: "Florida can be proud that more than \$33M will be flowing into the state under these projects, creating jobs while helping to improve health outcomes for Florida's most vulnerable populations."

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About Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc.

Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc. (CHCA) is a 501(c)(3) HRSA recognized Health Center Controlled Network, formed in 1999, currently serving safety-net health centers throughout Florida. Corporate offices are located within the Tampa Bay area, a marketplace focused on technology industry growth. CHCA has hands-on experience in various aspects of electronic health records adoption including vendor project management, implementation services, training, interfaces, education workshops, hosting and application support services. CHCA offers a solutions partnership for its members to improve health outcomes and access to care for predominantly uninsured and underinsured individuals throughout its members' service areas and surrounding communities. Members maintain independent management and fiscal oversight structures while leveraging resources to provide technology and other services that would otherwise be out of reach for stand-alone, non-profit, or rural healthcare organizations. CHCA members operate 72 health delivery sites and serve 52% of Florida's rural areas. Members serve more than 325,000 individuals with more than 1 million patient visits annually.

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