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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Contact: HHS Press Office
(202) 690-6343

Federal health IT coordinator completes nationwide system to assist doctors and hospitals in switching to electronic health records

David Blumenthal, M.D., national coordinator for health information technology, today announced selection of the final Regional Extension Centers (RECs), completing a national system of 62 organizations that will help physicians, clinics and hospitals to move from paper-based medical records to electronic health records (EHR).

Two new awardees were named to cover Orange County, Calif., and the state of New Hampshire. In addition, service areas were expanded for two already-named Florida RECs, completing RECs coverage of all areas of the country.

"The selection of these final awardees means that Regional Extension Centers are now in place in every region of our country to help health providers make the switch from paper-based medical practice to electronic health records," said Dr. Blumenthal. "For primary care physicians and smaller hospitals in particular, the RECs will be an important resource to help meet the challenges of adopting EHRs and using them to deliver better care."

New awardees announced today, with award amounts covering two years, are:

- CalOptima Foundation covering Orange County, Calif. (\$4,662,426)
- Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative covering the state of New Hampshire (\$5,105,495).

In addition, expanded coverage areas were announced for two Florida REC organizations: Community Health Centers Alliances will cover additional areas in Glades and Hendry counties, and Health Choice Network of Florida will cover additional areas in Indian River, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee counties.

RECs were created last year under the Health Information Technology Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. HITECH provided approximately \$2 billion in new programs to provide training and technical assistance and to demonstrate the effectiveness of health information technology in supporting improvement in care. Under the HITECH Act, \$677 million is allocated for the next two years to support a nationwide system of RECs.

Additionally, the HITECH Act also created the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs, which will provide incentive payments to eligible professionals and hospitals that adopt and demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology. Incentives totaling as much as \$27.4 billion over 10 years could be expended under the program, which is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

RECs will target their assistance to eligible primary care providers in smaller practices as well as small and rural hospitals and public health clinics. However, the RECs will also serve as a resource for all providers in an area, giving assistance, as feasible, to any doctor, hospital or clinic making the request. Each REC organization has identified a target number of primary care physicians, based on population needs to be assisted in the first two years of the program. For awardees announced today, the targets are: Orange County, 1,000 primary care physicians (PCPs); New Hampshire, 1,000 PCPs; Glades and Hendry, Fla., 21 PCPs; and Indian River, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee, Fla., 1,000 PCPs.

"Conversion from paper to electronic health records is a challenging task for any provider, and we believe that help from the RECs will make an important difference, especially in assisting doctors in smaller practices and the smaller and rural hospitals," said Dr. Blumenthal. "The RECs can also be important in helping providers make full use of the potential of EHRs for improving care and making medical practices work more effectively and efficiently."

A complete listing of REC grant recipients and additional information about the Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers may be found at <http://www.HealthIT.hhs.gov/programs/REC/>.

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

For information about HHS Recovery Act Health Information Technology programs, see http://www.hhs.gov/recovery/announcements/by_topic.html#hit.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

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