



Electronic Health Record (EHR) Tip Sheet for Providers

Georgia is leading the way to incentivize providers that utilize EHRs. The Georgia Medicaid EHR Incentive Program is a voluntary program administered by the Department of Community Health (DCH). The program is 100 percent federally funded and limited to eligible Medicaid providers.

Over the last few years there has been a progressive move from paper to digital technology in health care. Providers around the country are implementing EHR systems in their practices and health care facilities. While EHRs do require investments for technology and training, a fully functional EHR system can lead to long-term savings in a variety of areas and better business as studies have shown EHRs to generate a positive return on investment.

We understand that you may have questions concerning the transition to an EHR system and we're here to help guide you through the process. Below are helpful tips to assist you. Remember, all eligible Medicaid providers must begin the application process by the end of calendar year 2016. So don't wait. Get started today! Learn more at dch.georgia.gov/ehr or contact us at 1-800-766-4456.

Selection or upgrade of an EHR

There are different opinions regarding when the selection of an EHR system should be made in the planning phase. Some practices go through the planning process and develop the selection criteria they wish to use. Other practices begin by selecting an EHR system and then conduct planning to support the selected EHR system. Most practices develop an initial plan to identify their key goals, select an EHR system that supports these goals, and then finalize their plan after the selection.

The following are several considerations for EHR software comparison that the Regional Extension Centers (RECs) have found useful over the past several months:

- Understand if and how a vendor's product will accomplish the key goals of the practice by test driving your specific needs with the vendor's product. Provide the vendor with patient and office scenarios to customize their product demonstration
- Clarify start-up pricing before selecting an EHR system (hardware, software, maintenance and upgrade costs, option of phased payments, interfaces for labs and pharmacies, cost to connect to health information exchange (HIE), and customized quality reports)
- Define implementation support (amount, schedule, information on trainer(s) such as their communication efficiency and experience with product and company)
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and costs for data migration strategy if desired. Sometimes, being selective with which data or how much data to migrate can influence the ease of transition
- Server options (e.g., client server, application service provider (ASP), software as a service (SAS))
- Ability to integrate with other products (e.g., practice management software, billing systems, and public health interfaces)
- Privacy and security capabilities and back-up planning
- Linking payments and EHR incentive rewards to implementation milestones and performance goals

- Vendor’s stability and/or market presence in region
- Cost to connect to HIE
- Consider costs of using legal counsel for contract review verses open sources through medical associations

Workflow Redesign

Adopting an EHR will change the flow of patients through your organization. A workflow redesign is the process of:

- Mapping out current workflows and analyzing how your organization gets work done (the current state)
- Planning for the future by mapping out how EHRs will create new workflow patterns to improve your organization’s efficiency and health care quality (the future state)

Using electronic health records (EHRs) can help your organization build a sustainable medical practice. A workflow redesign is important because it helps you get the most value from EHR implementation. During the workflow redesign process, you should look at all aspects of your organization from an electronic point-of-view to help your organization:

- Maximize efficiencies
- Enhance health care quality and safety
- Remove chaos from your current workflow
- Improve care coordination

Tips for approaching workflow redesign

1. Identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies in your current workflow. Decide which aspects of your workflow need improvement and prioritize them. Then do the work in stages, creating wins along the way.
2. Experiment with a new workflow in small ways, or test different ways of doing a task to identify what works best in your practice. Try using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) method.
3. Listen to staff. What sounds like resistance is often valuable information about a process issue.
4. Use standard workflow templates to get started and visualize how the work gets done. Then customize the templates to show how the process works in your practice.

Assistance through Georgia Health Information Technology Extension Center (GA-HITEC)

DCH has partnered with GA-HITEC to assist health care professionals, as well as small and rural hospitals, with the selection, implementation and Meaningful Use of certified EHR systems.

Technical assistance is available to all eligible providers participating in the Georgia Medicaid EHR Incentive Program. For more information about GA-HITEC, visit the website at ga-hitec.org or call toll free at 877-658-1990.