



Wisconsin Health Information Technology Extension Center - Fact Sheet

The Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology has established Health Information Technology (HIT) Regional Extension Centers to support adoption of HIT.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, ONC awarded grants for the establishment and operation of Regional Extension Centers to provide HIT technical assistance to health care professionals within specific geographic regions. A consortium of six Wisconsin health care organizations received a grant to establish the Wisconsin Health Information Technology Extension Center (WHITEC) as the Regional Extension Center for the entire state of Wisconsin. WHITEC functions as a division of MetaStar and is overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the six collaborating organizations, which, in addition to MetaStar, are the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, the state of Wisconsin, Department of Health Services, the Wisconsin Hospital Association, the Wisconsin Medical Society, and the Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association. The goal of WHITEC is to ensure that health care professionals in Wisconsin are able to attain meaningful use of electronic health records and improve health care quality and efficiency in their practices.

HIT Regional Extension Centers – Quick Facts:

- A national program to offer technical assistance and support to health care professionals in adopting, implementing, and achieving meaningful use of electronic health records to improve the quality and efficiency of care and qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments
- The Extension Centers are funded via the ARRA of 2009, the federal stimulus package
- The ONC provides national oversight of the Regional Extension Centers
- The Extension Center grants are four-year cooperative agreements with a mix of federal funding, participation fees and other funding.

WHITEC Assistance and Support:

WHITEC is focused on ensuring that all health care professionals practicing in Wisconsin are able to attain meaningful use of EHRs and improve health care quality and efficiency in their practices. Services are available to all providers practicing in Wisconsin but financial subsidies will be available to priority primary care providers, which are defined as:

- physicians and other health care professionals with prescribing privileges in practices of ten or less providers
- ambulatory clinics connected to a public or critical access hospital
- community health centers or rural health clinics
- other ambulatory settings predominantly serving uninsured, underinsured, and medically underserved populations

WHITEC assists with the selecting, implementing, and achieving meaningful use of an EHR as well as reaching interoperability and health information exchange with other providers and agencies. Achieving meaningful use will enable primary care providers to become eligible for incentive payments from Medicare and Medicaid.

According to the US Department of Health & Human Services, the ARRA authorizes the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide reimbursement incentives for eligible providers who are “meaningful users” of EHR technology. Incentive payments begin in 2011 and gradually decrease. Starting in 2015, providers not actively using a certified EHR in compliance with the “meaningful use” definition will be subject to financial penalties.

WHITEC provides general and technical assistance and support for participating providers. An initial readiness assessment is conducted with each practice from which an individualized roadmap is developed to provide a methodical process and defined services for reaching meaningful use of their technology. Tailored assistance is provided for those practices that have already adopted and are striving for meaningful use as well as for those who are just beginning the adoption process.

Services available to participants include:

- Initial readiness assessment
- Individualized strategic “roadmap” plan for reaching meaningful use
- Workflow analysis and redesign tools
- Selection, contracting, and purchasing tools
- HIT installation and implementation assistance
- Privacy and security best practices
- Interoperability and health information exchange assistance
- EHR optimization and meaningful use achievement

Fees for WHITEC Services:

In the first two years of the extension program, assistance for priority primary care providers is subsidized, with approximately 90% of the funding for the services coming from the ONC grant and 10% from fees paid by participating providers or other sources. For other providers and for priority primary care providers in years three and four, there will be a fee scale.

For more information on how you can apply to participate with WHITEC and to learn more about the Regional Extension Centers visit www.whitec.org. Contact Jesi Wang, Project Director at 608-729-2700 or 866-710-4212 or jwang@whitec.org with questions.