

SEC. 6012. GRANTS TO IMPROVE TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF RURAL HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.

Subtitle D of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1981-2008r), as amended by section 5025 of this Act, is amended by inserting after section 365 the following:

SEC. 366. GRANTS TO IMPROVE TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF RURAL HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.

(a) In General- The Secretary shall establish a program to award grants to rural health facilities for the purpose of assisting the facilities in--

(1) purchasing health information technology to improve quality in health care and patient safety; or

(2) improving health care quality and patient safety, including the development of--

(A) quality improvement support structures to assist rural health systems and professionals--

(i) achieve greater integration of personal and population health services; and

(ii) address safety, effectiveness, patient- or community-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency, and equity; and

(B) innovative approaches to the financing and delivery of health services to achieve rural health quality goals.

(b) Definitions- In this section:

(1) HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY- The term 'health information technology' includes total expenditures incurred for--

(A) purchasing, leasing, and installing computer software and hardware, including handheld computer technologies, and related services;

(B) making improvements to computer software and hardware;

(C) purchasing or leasing communications capabilities necessary for clinical data access, storage, and exchange;

(D) services associated with acquiring, implementing, operating, or optimizing the use of computer software and hardware and clinical health care informatics systems;

(E) providing education and training to eligible entity staff on information systems and technology designed to improve patient safety and quality of care; and

(F) purchasing, leasing, subscribing, or servicing support to establish interoperability that--

(i) integrates patient-specific clinical data with well-established national treatment guidelines;

(ii) provides ongoing, continuous quality improvement functions that allow providers to assess improvement rates over time and against averages for similar providers; and

(iii) integrates with larger health networks.

(2) RURAL AREA- The term 'rural area' means any area of the United States that is not--

(A) included within the boundaries of any city, town, borough, or village, whether incorporated or unincorporated, with a population of more than 20,000 inhabitants; or

(B) the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town.

(3) RURAL HEALTH FACILITY- The term 'rural health facility' means any of the following:

(A) SOLE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL- A hospital (as defined in section 1886(a)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(a)(2))).

(B) CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL- A critical access hospital (as defined in section 1861(mm)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(mm)(1))).

(C) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER IN RURAL AREAS- A federally qualified health center (as defined in section 1861(aa)(4) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(aa)(4)) that is located in a rural area.

(D) RURAL PHYSICIAN OR RURAL PHYSICIAN GROUP PRACTICE- A physician or physician group practice that is located in a rural area.

(E) RURAL HEALTH CLINIC- A rural health clinic (as defined in section 1861(aa)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(aa)(2))).

(F) MEDICARE DEPENDENT HOSPITAL- A medicare-dependent, small rural hospital (as defined in section 1886(d)(5)(G)(iv) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)(5)(G)(iv))).

(G) RURAL HEALTH FACILITY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY NETWORK- A formally incorporated network of rural health facilities as defined in subsections (A) through (F) above, organized for the purpose of coordinating and facilitating acquisition, development and operation of health information technology on behalf of its constituent members.

(c) Amount of Grant- The Secretary shall determine the amount of a grant awarded under this section.

(d) Furnishing the Secretary With Information- An eligible entity receiving a grant under this section shall furnish the Secretary with such information as the Secretary may require to--

(1) evaluate the project for which the grant is made; and

(2) ensure that assistance provided under the grant is expended for the purposes for which the grant is made.

(e) Authorization of Appropriations- There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this section not more than \$30,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012.