Key Health Alliance
Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Who is Key Health Alliance?
A: Key Health Alliance is a partnership of Stratis Health, Rural Health Resource Center, and The College of St. Scholastica and was developed with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the rural and underserved. The three organizations have a long history of working together to improve health care. Each organization has unique and complementary expertise and experience in health care quality, education, patient safety initiatives, and health information technology. This partnership formalizes our commitment to a long term, ongoing, working relationship.

Key Health Alliance is submitting an application to be the Health Information Technology (HIT) Regional Extension Center for Minnesota and North Dakota.

Q: What are the Health Information Technology (HIT) Regional Extension Centers?
A: The HIT Regional Extension Centers (Regional Centers) are part of the Health Information Technology Extension Program established through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 as part of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act.

Q: What is the purpose of the HIT Regional Extension Center?
A: The purpose of the HIT Regional Extension Centers (Regional Centers) is to assist providers in adopting, implementing, and achieving meaningful use with their electronic health record (EHR)/HIT system.

Q: What type of assistance will Regional Centers provide?
A: The assistance Regional Centers will provide can be broken down to two levels:
  • General Assistance – This includes outreach, education, workforce support, tools and resources in all aspects of EHR/HIT adoption, implementation, and meaningful use for all primary care providers.
  • Technical Assistance – This includes direct, one-on-one, intensive assistance in the areas of vendor selection, group purchasing, implementation, workflow redesign, interoperability, health information exchange (HIE), and privacy and security for priority primary care providers.

Q: Who are the priority primary care providers?
A: The HITECH Act requires Regional Centers prioritize the assistance they provide to priority primary care providers. Priority primary care providers are defined as:
  Physicians (IM, FP, DO, Ob/GYN, Peds) and health care professionals with prescriptive privileges (PA, NP, nurse midwife) primarily focused on primary care in the following settings:
  • Individual and small group practices (ten or fewer professionals with prescriptive privileges) primarily focused on primary care;
  • Public and Critical Access Hospitals;
  • Community health centers and rural health clinics; and
  • Other settings that predominantly serve uninsured, underinsured, and medically underserved populations.
Q: Will there be more than one Regional Center for Minnesota and North Dakota?
A: The grant indicates that Regional Centers will not overlap another geographic Regional Center. When Key Health Alliance receives approval to be the Regional Center for Minnesota and North Dakota, no other Regional Center will provide assistance in this geographic area.

We will, however, work very closely with other Regional Centers across the nation to share best practices, tools, and information.

Q: How will Key Health Alliance serve the providers in North Dakota?
A: Key Health Alliance will provide services in North Dakota in conjunction with:
1. North Dakota Health Care Review
2. University of North Dakota, Center for Rural Health

These two organizations have a history of working closely with providers in North Dakota and understand the needs of their health care community. Key Health Alliance is pleased to partner with them to meet the distinct needs of the North Dakota provider community.

Q: Will providers who have implemented an EHR be eligible for assistance?
A: Regional Centers will provide assistance, as defined above, regardless of where the provider is on the continuum of EHR adoption and utilization. Whether providers are beginning the search for an EHR or have implemented an EHR and are working toward meaningful use, the regional center will be able to work with them.

Q: Will providers who do not deliver primary care be eligible for assistance?
A: Key Health Alliance and their partners are dedicated to improving patient safety and quality of care in all settings with all providers. While the focus of the Regional Centers and their funding will be directed at primary care and the priority primary care providers, we anticipate continuing to offer educational opportunities, tools and resources to the entire health care community. All of our HIT consultative services will continue to be available on a fee for service basis.

Q: How do I sign-up to receive services as a priority primary care provider?
A: Initially Key Health Alliance is asking all priority primary care providers to sign a letter of commitment indicating they are interested in receiving the services of the Regional Center. A template letter is provided on Stratis Health’s Web site (http://www.stratishealth.org/documents/ProviderLetterofCommitment.doc).

Complete the commitment letter by listing all priority primary care providers with their NPI number, have an authorized representative sign the letter, and fax:

To:  Attn - Chere Wood
Fax: 952-853-8503

If you have any questions about completing the commitment letter, contact Chere Wood at 952-853-8558 or cwood@stratishealth.org.

Q: What advantage is there to signing a letter of commitment?
A: There are two advantages to signing the letter of commitment.
1) It identifies your interest in receiving significantly subsidized services to assist you in your EHR/HIT efforts.
2) After Key Health Alliance is awarded Regional Center designation, we will contact providers who completed a letter of commitment to discuss next steps and establish a timeline to begin providing technical assistance.
Q: What disadvantage is there to signing a letter of commitment?
A: The letter of commitment is not a contract and does not bind the provider to any of the services that the Regional Center will provide. If a provider signs a letter of commitment then decides they do not wish to receive services from the Regional Center, they merely need to inform us of their decision when we contact them.

Q: What if I am not a priority primary care provider but would like to receive assistance?
A: Providers who are not priority primary care providers, but are interested in receiving services, should contact Sue Severson, Director of HIT Services, sseverson@stratishealth.org, or at 952-853-8538.

Q: Is there a fee for the services the Regional Center will provide?
A: Technical assistance services will be available for all types of providers across the continuum of care. In the first two years of the program, technical assistance will be subsidized for priority primary care providers, with approximately 90% of the funding for the Regional Center’s services coming from the grant and 10% from fees paid by participating providers. For example, if your practice is five to 10 physicians, you may receive services valued at $25,000-$50,000, and may only pay a fee of $500-$2,000. For all other providers, and for priority primary care providers after the first two years, there will be a fee scale based on the services needed.

Q: When will the Regional Center begin providing services?
A: Key Health Alliance is in the process of completing the full application for the Regional Extension Center. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) will announce the awards on December 11, 2009. We anticipate beginning our work in mid January 2010.

Q: Who do I contact with questions?
A: The following contacts and resources are available:
   - General questions, commitment letter
     Chere Wood, Program Coordinator HIT
cwood@stratishealth.org, 952-854-8558
   - HIT services, technical assistance, consultation
     Sue Severson, Director of HIT Services
sseverson@stratishealth.org, 952-853-8538
   - HIT Regional Center information
http://www.stratishealth.org/expertise/healthit/clinics/HITREC.html