

Electronic Health Records: State Incentives and Usability Across Hospital Systems

Abstract:

At the request of leadership from the General Assembly's Maryland House Health & Government Operations (HGO) Committee, the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) evaluated the State-regulated Payer Electronic Health Record (EHR) Adoption Incentive program (State incentive program) to determine if changes are necessary to ensure that the intent of the law is met. About four percent of Maryland's eligible primary care physician practices had received payments under the State incentive program, as of April 2103, while approximately 29 percent have participated in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Program (federal incentive program). In collaboration with the State incentive program workgroup (workgroup), the following State incentive program enhancements were developed: 1) align the State incentive program requirements with the federal incentive program; 2) simplify the administration of the State incentive program application and payment process; 3) clarify the definition of a primary care physician practice eligible for an incentive payment; 4) extend the sunset date by two years to December 31, 2016; and 5) assess the impact of the State incentive program in 2015. The MHCC was also asked by the HGO Committee leadership to explore provider challenges involving the usability of EHR systems across hospital settings and provide recommendations to mitigate these challenges. In collaboration with stakeholders, MHCC recommends establishing consistent EHR training standards across acute care hospital settings to help ensure that providers have sufficient knowledge of the EHR systems before using them as part of care delivery. In 2014, MHCC anticipates revising the State incentive program regulations, and working with acute care hospitals to develop a standard EHR training curriculum.