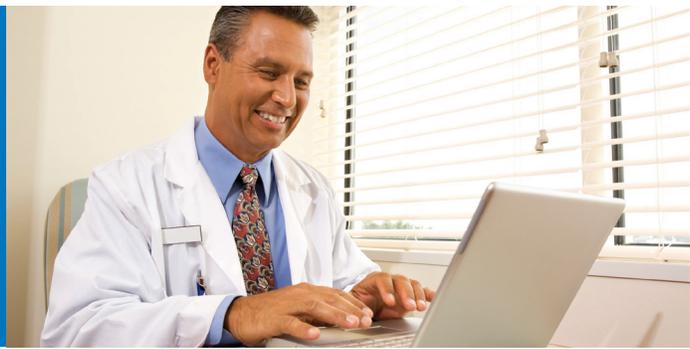


Electronic Health Records FAQs



When will the electronic health record (EHR) be required for dentistry?

For the vast majority of dentists, there is no fixed deadline to switch to electronic health records.

The deadline exception is for dentists who bill Medicare for patient services. For these dentists, starting in 2015, Medicare reimbursement rates will be affected if ‘meaningful use’ of EHRs has not been demonstrated.

How can I qualify for incentives to implement an electronic record?

Incentives are available from the federal government for dentists who bill Medicaid or Medicare for patient services.

For Medicaid, a dentist must be licensed and qualify as an “eligible professional”; must minimally have a Medicaid patient volume of 30%; and must be in good standing with the federal government (not on the exclusion list of the Office of the Inspector General). States may set different requirements, so check the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) website for information on your state (<http://onc-chpl.force.com/ehrcert/EHRProductSearch?setting=Ambulatory>).

If you meet these requirements, then to qualify for incentive payments you must either upgrade, adopt or implement a certified EHR system, register with both the federal government and your state, and demonstrate ‘meaningful use’ of your system. The maximum incentive is \$63,750 over a six year period of time.

Incentives are also available for eligible dentists who bill Medicare for services. To participate, you cannot have a hospital based practice and you must be registered in the online PECOS system. Up to \$44,000 over a five year period is available.

Do you think you are eligible for both Medicaid incentives and Medicare incentives? You have to choose, because you can only register for one of the programs — no double dipping is allowed.

What does it mean if an EHR is certified?

Testing agencies have been chosen to evaluate the electronic health record systems for technological capability, functionality and security. Six certification bodies have been named by the federal government’s Office of the National Coordinator (ONC).

How can I check to see if my software is certified?

A certified product list is maintained by the ONC. The most up to date information can be found on their website: <http://onc-chpl.force.com/ehrcert/EHRProductSearch?setting=Ambulatory>.

What is “Meaningful Use”?

This refers to the set of criteria developed by the federal government to measure an eligible professional’s use of electronic health records to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of patient care. One example is using the EHR to electronically send prescriptions to pharmacies. Another criterion is the use of the EHR to report clinical quality measures; however, clinical quality measures have not yet been established for dentistry.

Will this impact how I am reimbursed by the payers?

For traditional billing arrangements, there will be no impact on reimbursement.

For the relatively small number of dentists who bill Medicare, there will be reductions in Medicare payments to providers who do not adopt EHRs by the end of 2014.

My office is already virtually paperless now. Would I qualify for the Medicaid incentive program?

You might qualify, but most likely would not. One key to qualifying for the incentive program is that an EHR be “interoperable,” which means that your electronic data could be sent to another EHR system seamlessly. If this is not possible, even though you are paperless, you have not adopted certified electronic health records and would not qualify for incentive payments.

Is it true that dentists will have to start reporting diagnostic codes?

Diagnostic codes let the payer know why a procedure was performed. While diagnostic codes have never been required for submitting dental insurance claims, they have been required for medical claims for many years.

Beginning January 1, 2012, the updated version of the dental electronic claim will include a field to report diagnostic codes. You will not have to use diagnostic codes for typical dental claims.

However, some insurance companies may cover services that will require reporting of a diagnosis code (ICD-9-CM) when specific dental procedures may minimize some health risks associated with a systemic condition. For example, some payers are covering a third cleaning per benefit year when a patient is pregnant. Work with your software vendor to ensure that your system will flag these claims and auto-populate the record with the appropriate diagnosis code. A revision of ICD-9-CM, ICD-10, will be used beginning October 1, 2013.

“Business Associates” will have access to my EHR. What is a business associate?

A business associate is a person or a company who needs access to your patients’ protected health information (PHI) in order to do a task on behalf of your practice. Examples of some business associates might be a lawyer, accountant, consultant, insurance company, clearinghouse, a billing service, or a computer support service. You need to review your business practices to identify your business associates, and make sure you have entered into an appropriate “business associate agreement” with each.

How can I be sure that my business associates are not mining the health information I share with them?

It can be difficult to know for sure if a business associate is inappropriately using or disclosing PHI. Do your due diligence when choosing a business associate, make sure an appropriate business associate agreement is in place before allowing access to PHI, and take reasonable steps to become aware of the business associate’s violation of HIPAA or the business associate agreement or breach of unsecured PHI. Under the HITECH Act, business associates are now subject to the same civil and criminal penalties as covered entities for HIPAA violations and must comply with certain HIPAA provisions. Ask about a prospective business associate’s HIPAA compliance program. If you become aware that a business associate has misused PHI, violated HIPAA or the business associate agreement, or discovered a breach of unsecured PHI, HIPAA requires you to take certain steps immediately. The Office for Civil Rights provides information about HIPAA at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/>. See our FAQs on *Business Associates* for more information.

Additional information can be found at ADA.org/paperless.

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