



For immediate release

Regional Nonprofit Plays Key Role in National Electronic Medical Records Initiative

Duluth, MN—The Social Security Administration has chosen the Community Health Information Collaborative (CHIC) as one of only 15 organizations nationwide to submit patient medical records electronically, reducing time needed to make disability determinations.

CHIC will receive a \$977,000 grant as part of a \$17.4 million program to provide electronic medical records to the Social Security Administration via the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN), shortening the time needed to make a disability decision and improving the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of the disability program.

This is the second time federal agencies have chosen CHIC to help implement a national electronic medical record exchange. In May 2008, CHIC was one of 15 organizations chosen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help develop and test NHIN, designed to allow health information to follow the consumer, lowering costs, reducing medical errors and improving patient care.

“CHIC is thrilled to work with the federal government to develop secure, effective methods of sharing medical records electronically,” said Cheryl Stephens, president and CEO of CHIC. “We have been working with our members since 1997 to create the infrastructure, relationships and trust required to leverage technology to improve patient care and save money.

“It’s gratifying to see our efforts and approach both acknowledged and appreciated by our federal partners,” Stephens said. “Our work with the Social Security Administration will complement CHIC’s existing initiatives to improve patient care and save healthcare dollars.”

Among other member services, CHIC has created a health information exchange known as HIEBridge™ that uses a secure, Web-based service to allow health care providers to locate patients’ medical records at other participating facilities—saving critical minutes in what can be emergency situations.

The Social Security Administration contract requires awardees, with a patient’s authorization, to send electronic medical records through the NHIN, a safe and secure method for receiving access to electronic medical records over the Internet.

“Using health information technology will improve our disability programs and provide better service to the public,” said Social Security Commissioner Michael J. Astrue. “We’ve seen a significant increase in disability applications. To process them, the agency sends more than 15 million requests annually for medical records to healthcare providers. This largely paper-bound workload is generally the most time-consuming part of the disability decision process.

“The use of health IT will dramatically improve the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of this process, reducing the cost of making a disability decision for both the medical community and the American taxpayer,” Astrue said.

CHIC will use the grant to enhance HIE-Bridge™ so participating providers can upgrade their electronic health record systems, develop the interface with the Social Security Administration and enhance existing consent management and trust agreements which are in place to ensure privacy and security.

CHIC's electronic network incorporates the highest level of patient privacy and security available. It was built by MEDNET USA, a Minneapolis-based firm.

For more information, contact:
Cheryl Stephens, president and CEO, at 218.625.5515
or cstephens@medinfosystems.org