



West Virginia Regional Health Information  
Technology Extension Center

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## **WVRHITEC Achieves Goal Of Helping 1,000 Doctors To Adopt Electronic Health Records *Major Step Toward Patient-Centered Medical Environment***

CHARLESTON, W.VA. – The West Virginia Regional Health Information Technology Extension Center (WVRHITEC) has achieved its goal of helping 1,000 West Virginia’s primary care providers to adopt a certified electronic health record system. The use of electronic health records is part of a federal initiative designed to transform and improve medical care across the nation.

“The conversion to secure, protected electronic health record systems will promote improved health outcomes and encourage better coordination of care among doctors, hospitals and labs. This also will increase efficiencies and reduce costs associated with the management of costly chronic conditions,” said Dwayne Edwards, the Director of the WVRHITEC.

“Primary care physicians and associated health workers are the first point of contact with health care for most West Virginians. The adoption and use of electronic health records (EHR), together with a secure means of exchanging important health information, will make important health information available to patients and health care providers to facilitate better management of health in a proactive fashion,” he added.

“A large number of the providers with EHRs practice in rural or community-based settings. They are usually in small practices of less than 10 providers and represent a significant part of the state’s primary care infrastructure and the front-line of many of our health promotion efforts,” Edwards explained.

The WVRHITEC is part of the national Regional Extension Center program and is managed locally by the West Virginia Health Improvement Institute. More than 100,000 health care providers are working with RECs nationwide. For the past three years the WVRHITEC has been working to assist and educate more than 1,550 health care providers across the state who are interesting in adopting electronic health records and using these electronic systems to achieve federal meaningful use outcomes. Services provided by the WVRHITEC include counseling in EHR system selection, workflow changes, privacy/security guidance, implementation oversight and education in meaningful use requirements. More than 630 providers receiving assistance from WVRHITEC have already demonstrated and attained meaningful use of their respective EHRs.

Edwards noted that the WVRHITEC also is working in partnership with the West Virginia Health Information Network (WVHIN), which has implemented a statewide health information exchange service. That exchange is operational and allows doctors, hospitals and other health care centers to share electronic health records, medical data and lab reports. More than 600 providers, many supported by the WVRHITEC, have also used the WVHIN's secure messaging system (WV Direct) to exchange health care information to improve the health of patients. Providers are also able to exchange vital health care information such as lab results and immunization records through the WVHIN and coordinate access to patient's advance directives with the West Virginia e-Directive registry.

"Now that EHR technologies are becoming widely adopted -- both here in West Virginia and across the nation -- they will facilitate the digital exchange of health information and the establishment of a patient-centered medical environment," he added. "Ultimately, patients will become empowered partners in their own medical care as they will be able to access and control their own health information."

"I applaud the clinics and doctors who have invested the time, money and energy to make this transition to a digital health workplace. They are leaders in an effort that is truly transforming healthcare here in West Virginia by enhancing the safety, efficiency and quality of care for their patients," Edwards continued.

For more information, contact the West Virginia Regional HIT Extension Center: [www.wvrhitec.org](http://www.wvrhitec.org).

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