

NEW EHR Certification Criteria for 2014

Beginning January 1, 2014, all eligible professionals (EPs) are required to use a 2014 Edition Electronic Health Record (EHR) regardless of their stage of meaningful use.¹

The new certification supports all stages of meaningful use with updates to accommodate interoperability and patient engagement. The 2011 Edition certification in place expired at the end of 2013.

Many EHR vendors are still in the process of updating their current systems in order to become certified by the new 2014 standards, but there's no need to wait. You can take the following steps now to prepare for making informed business decisions in the best interest of your practice.

1. Ask Questions

Ask your vendor questions about their upgrade plan so you know whether your EHR will or will not meet certain meaningful use measures. To assist in the review, visit HealthIT.gov for a crosswalk on Meaningful Use Stage 2 and 2014 EHR Certification Criteria.

2. Be Informed

Familiarize yourself and your practice with the changes between Stage 1 and Stage 2 Meaningful Use. This will help when communicating with your vendor about the necessary EHR upgrades.

3. Get Local Assistance

What is the Hardship Exemption?

EPs may apply for hardship exceptions to avoid payment adjustments. Hardship exceptions will be granted only under specific circumstances and only if the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) determines that providers have demonstrated that those circumstances pose a significant barrier to their achieving meaningful use. Information on how to apply for a hardship exception will be posted on the CMS EHR Incentive Programs website in the future. Applications need to be submitted no later than July 1 of the year before the payment adjustment (July 1, 2014). Earlier submission is encouraged.²

Do CMS' Proposed Updates to the Certification Process Affect the 2014 EHR Certification Standards?

The proposal for a more regular approach to update certification standards DOES NOT affect the 2014 EHR certification criteria requirements. In the future, certification criteria may be updated more frequently.

The goal of the proposed updates is to ensure that the public can provide input, enable the certification processes to adapt to new industry standards more quickly and add more predictability for EHR technology developers.

It is expected that the 2015 Edition would be voluntary in the sense that providers participating in the EHR Incentive Programs would NOT have to upgrade to the 2015 Edition. Additionally, NO EHR developer who has certified its EHR technology to the 2014 Edition would need to recertify its products.³



Questions to Ask Your Vendor

Pricing

1. **Will there be any additional costs to upgrade to the 2014-certified version?**
 - For example: Are there extra set-up costs in order to exchange information with my lab provider and local agencies?
2. **What is the cost for additional training related to the 2014 upgrade?**
3. **If my patient portal must be purchased separately, what are the associated costs?**
 - Is it a one-time charge or recurring cost?

Functionality

1. **When will the 2014 ONC-certified version be ready to implement?**
2. **Is there a patient portal built into my EHR?**
 - Will my clinic name/logos appear on the patient portal?
3. **If I am using a web-based EHR (SaaS), what is required to implement the 2014 upgrade?**
4. **How will my EHR support electronic exchange of information related to transitions of care and/or health information exchange?**
 - Will I need a Health Internet Service Provider (HISP) in order to exchange information?
5. **Out of the 64 available, how many CQMs will my EHR be able to satisfy once certified?**
6. **How will my EHR satisfy imaging requirements?**
 - For example, some EHRs will be set up with medical imaging technology such as picture archiving communication system (PACS) and other EHRs will store images internally.



(1) "6 Things You Need to Know about Meaningful Use and EHR Certification in 2014." Health IT Buzz. 20 Sept. 2013.

Web: <http://www.healthit.gov/buzz-blog/health-innovation/6-meaningful-ehr-certification-2014/>

(2) "Payment Adjustments & Hardship Exceptions Tipsheet for Eligible Professionals." <http://www.cms.gov/>. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Oct. 2013.

Web: http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/Downloads/PaymentAdj_HardshipExcepTipSheetforEP.pdf

(3) Reider, Jacob, MD, and Robert Tagalicod. "Progress on Adoption of Electronic Health Records." Health IT Buzz Progress on Adoption of Electronic Health Records Comments. N.p., 6 Dec. 2013. Web: <http://www.healthit.gov/buzz-blog/electronic-health-and-medical-records/progress-adoption-electronic-health-records/>