Health IT Resources for Safety Net and Rural Health Care Communities

Purpose

This document provides a listing of the Health IT resources and workforce-training opportunities available to support medically underserved communities.

Background

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act under Title XIII of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was established to enable providers to establish electronic health records (EHRs) to improve the delivery of healthcare for all patients. Health information technology (health IT) is a vital tool to support the aim of health care reform to increase access, improve care delivery, engage patients through culturally competent outreach and education, and enhance workforce development and training.

An electronic health record (EHR) that includes documentation of demographics, including race and ethnicity, risk factor assessments, and evidence-based preventive and chronic disease management decision support, enables clinicians to manage the complex health care needs of vulnerable populations more effectively. Health IT can assist in promoting patient self-management and self-empowerment through available cultural and linguistically appropriate patient information, improved communication with clinical staff, and support outreach efforts which can lead to improved health outcomes and reduction in health disparities.

Medically underserved communities experience greater health disparities than the general population, a gap widening due to the complex social determinants of health: poverty, hunger, poor housing, limited English language proficiency, low literacy and inadequate education. These communities often do not have adequate access to healthcare services due to lack of insurance and/or lack of familiarity with the healthcare delivery system, or live in an area where providers are not readily available to meet their needs.

Before the benefits of Health IT can be realized in underserved health care communities, many barriers and challenges must be addressed to avoid creating a technological divide within the health care system. Resources are available to support the technical challenges with connectivity and limited broadband, interoperability, financial burden and IT workforce development and training.

Listed are some of the available resources that focus on key strategies for successful adoption and utilization of health IT including workforce development, financial support and federal incentives, provider and consumer education, and communication infrastructure to meet the meaningful use requirements of the 2009 ARRA HITECH Act.

MEANINGFUL USE RESOURCES

CMS EHR Incentive Programs Overview Web site
http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/index.html
On this web site you can find information pertaining to Medicare and Medicaid incentives for EHR adoption, resources for EHR adoption and security and privacy (HIPAA) as well as links to other government sites. Resources include: Meaningful Use Overview, Meaningful Use Specification Sheets, Path to Payment, Timeline for Medicare and Medicaid EHR Incentive Programs, MU stage 1 and 2 toolkits, CMS Eligible Provider Meaningful Use Registration and Attestation.

Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC)
http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals
ONC Provides leadership for the development and nationwide implementation of an interoperable health IT infrastructure. ONC has funded 70 Regional Extension Centers (RECs) to support and serve health care providers to help them quickly become adept and meaningful users of electronic health records (EHRs) by providing support, training, and technical assistance in EHR adoption, implementation. This is a good starting point for Health IT overview of federal initiatives and resources in areas of MU, Certification, Security and Privacy, health information exchange. Best use case studies shared.

> **Being a Meaningful User of Electronic Health Records**
> http://healthit.hhs.gov/meaningfuluse/provider

> **ONC Privacy and Security Resource Bank**
> http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/ehr-privacy-security

HRSA's Office of Health Information Technology (HRSA-OHIT)
http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/

HRSA Health IT Toolbox
Health IT Adoption Toolbox is a compilation of planning, implementation and evaluation resources to help community health centers, other safety net providers, and ambulatory care providers implement health IT applications in their facilities.

HRSA Safety Net Webcasts
Webinars and technical assistance webcasts are intended for safety net providers featuring leading experts with hands-on experience from within the safety net community, as well as speakers with various grantee experiences and federal expertise.

National Health IT Collaborative for the Underserved (NHIT)
http://www.nhitunderserved.org
A public/private/community partnership supporting the full engagement of HIT in underserved populations, with an emphasis on communities of color. Areas of focus include Education and outreach, Workforce development and training, Policy, Finance and Sustainability.

AHRQ's National Resource Center (NRC) on Health Information Technology
http://healthit.ahrq.gov
Collection of health IT topics in disease registries, personal health records, usability testing, education and training, privacy and security, quality measurement and improvement, and transitions in care. The health IT bibliography represents both peer-reviewed articles from professional journals and Web-based resources from highly respected health care and IT organizations. The *Health IT Tools* link includes a privacy and security tool kit, searchable Costs &Benefits database, and evaluation toolkits.

American Academy of Family Physicians Center for Health Information Technology
http://www.centerforhit.org
This site includes tutorials on EMR basics, opportunities to talk with peers in similar practices, and practice and clinical improvement tools.

Equity in the Digital Age: How Health Information Technology Can Reduce Disparities
http://www.cpehn.org/pdfs/EquityInTheDigitalAge2013.pdf
February 2013. California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Consumers Union and the National Council of La Raza offers policy recommendations for how advancements can best improve health in all communities and highlights the importance of improving access to new technologies in underserved areas to avoid exacerbating existing disparities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

HRSA Health IT Training Opportunities
http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/workforce/training.html
Listing of programs and opportunities to help facilitate the education and training of a new health IT workforce including the Community College Consortia, 80 community colleges around the nation that offer generous tuition reimbursement and grants.

Workforce Development & Training
http://www.nhitunderserved.org/workgroups/training.html

ONC Federally Funded Health IT Competency Exam
http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/workforce/oncexam.html
Assesses the competency of health IT professionals, employers to identify training gaps that are important in achieving meaningful use of electronic health information

Health Workforce Information Center
http://www.hwic.org/topics/introduction.php?id=50
Health Information Technology and Telehealth guide on health IT and telehealth workforce roles and training as well as the technology's capabilities to assist with team-based care and improve health care access.

RURAL HEALTH IT

HealthIT.gov
http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/benefits-critical-access-hospitals-and-other-small-rural-hospitals
Complete guide to tools and resources to the benefits of EHRs in Critical Access Hospitals and other small and rural hospitals including hospital leadership, funding, workforce development, and broadband access issues.

Rural Health IT Toolbox
http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/RuralHealthITtoolbox/Telehealth/index.html
HRSA (http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/telehealth/)
The Telehealth Network Grant Program (TNGP)
The Telehealth Resource Center Grant Program (TRC)
HRSA Grants http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/index.html

FCC's Health Care Connect Fund (for rural areas)
Subsidizes 65% of the broadband costs of non-profit hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare providers.
http://www.fcc.gov/document/healthcare-connect-fund-fact-sheet

USDA Rural Development—Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DLT.html

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)

HIMSS is a global, cause-based, not-for-profit organization focused on better health through information technology (IT). Globally HIMSS leads efforts to optimize health engagements and care outcomes using information technology. HIMSS is a part of HIMSS WorldWide, a cause-based, global enterprise producing health IT thought leadership, education, events, market research and media services around the world. Founded in 1961, HIMSS WorldWide encompasses more than 52,000 individuals, of which more than two-thirds work in healthcare provider, governmental and not-for-profit organizations across the globe, plus over 600 corporations and 250 not-for-profit partner organizations, that share this cause. HIMSS WorldWide, headquartered in Chicago, serves the global health IT community with additional offices in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Many Health IT assessment and implementation tools and resources available, including *Workflow redesign for Meaningful Use toolkit.*

Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)

http://clinicians.org/category/health-it/
ACU is a nonprofit, transdisciplinary organization representing more than 8,000 clinicians, 900 organizations, and 18 professional disciplines working to improve the health of America's underserved populations. ACU has framed its Health IT Public Policy Principles to guide policymakers to make informed decisions on legislation and regulations regarding health IT, with the goal of improving safety, privacy & security, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency, and equity for underserved populations. ACU has compiled a list of resources for Health IT for the Underserved.