

Frequently Asked Questions Electronic Health Records

What is an electronic health record (EHR)?

An EHR is an electronic record of health-related information about an individual that conforms to nationally recognized interoperability standards and that can be created, managed, and consulted by authorized clinicians and staff across more than one health care organization.

I have an e-prescribing system, is that considered an electronic health record?

No, an e-prescribing system is a type of health information technology but it is not an electronic health record. Some electronic health record systems may include e-prescribing functionality.

I have an electronic billing system, is that considered an electronic health record?

No, just like the e-prescribing tool, an electronic billing system is a type of health information technology that may or may not be part of an electronic health record system, but is not an electronic health record by itself.

What is considered to be “certified” EHR technology?

The Office of the National (Health Information Technology) Coordinator (ONC) published its’ interim final rule in January 2010 defining the standards an EHR system must meet to be considered a certified EHR. Once that rule is final, vendors will know what a system must contain to be considered certified. The ONC will also define the process for obtaining certification. Those providers who do not currently have an EHR system but are considering purchasing one, should discuss this with potential vendors.

How do I know if my EHR is certified?

Currently, no EHR is certified. The process for obtaining that certification is not yet in place. Providers who currently have EHR systems are encouraged to talk with their vendor about upcoming standards and certification. It is possible that many current EHRs will require an update to meet certification.

If I already have an EHR that has been certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT), will I have to buy a new system if the government mandates that only EHRs that meet a higher certification level are considered certified EHRs?

Decisions about EHR standards, implementation specifications, and certification criteria have not been finalized yet. The temporary proposed rules were published by the ONC on January 13, 2010. Final rules are expected in late spring or early summer 2010.