

## News release

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### **Oregon health care providers receive first payments encouraging electronic care coordination**

Doctors and health care providers across Oregon are beginning to increase their use of computers to store patient records. Last month, hospitals and providers that treat Medicaid patients began applying for federal grants that will help them make the switch from paper records to electronic health records.

Dr., Kenneth Carlson, a pediatrician at Childhood Health Associates of Salem, was one of the first in the state – and the first in the Salem area – to receive an incentive payment. “Using electronic health records to help us better track a patient’s care can lead us toward improving health outcomes,” Carlson said.

Electronic records have the ability to keep a secure record of a patient’s complete health picture, from checkup reminders to prescribed medications and medical tests. “Electronic records reduce the time it takes to find relevant patient information and can remind us of the care they need,” Carlson said. “For example, computers can track how many of the kids we see are up-to-date on their immunizations, letting us focus on helping those who aren’t.”

In Oregon the grants are administered through the Medicaid Electronic Health Records (EHR) Incentive Program, moving forward Oregon’s drive for better health, better care and lower costs. The program is open to all hospitals and providers who treat a specified number of Medicaid patients.

In the first weeks of the program, 22 providers from five clinics have received payments, including Dr. Carlson’s clinic, Childhood Health Associates of Salem; La Clinica del Valle, a Medford clinic; and physicians in Klamath Falls and Bend. Since the launch of the program in late September, over 100 applications have been submitted.

To receive a payment in 2011, health care providers must apply no later than Feb. 29, 2012, and no later than Nov. 30, 2011 for hospitals. Providers eligible for the program can receive up to \$63,750 over a six-year period. Hospital grants will vary based on a number of elements, including Medicaid hospital stays and total hospital discharges.

“My colleagues and I are excited to be one of the first in the state to receive our incentive payment,” Carlson said. “But it’s important for all eligible providers that qualify to apply. Technology helps to organize a patient’s health information for easy and secure access, supporting better decisions in the exam room.”

Hospitals and providers interested in applying for the Medicaid EHR Incentives program can visit [medicaidehrincentives.oregon.gov](http://medicaidehrincentives.oregon.gov) to learn more.

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