



# North Carolina Regional Extension Center

Helping providers succeed  
in a changing environment

## North Carolina AHEC

The mission of the North Carolina AHEC Program is to meet the state's health and health workforce needs by providing

educational programs in partnership with academic institutions, health care agencies, and other organizations committed to improving the health of the people of North Carolina.

In its role as a Regional Extension Center, NC AHEC will support more than 3,500 primary care providers through the nine AHEC regions in North Carolina with direct, individualized, and on-site technical assistance in:

- Preparing the office practices by assessing and redesigning their office systems to ready for an electronic health record.
- Selecting a certified EHR product that offers best value for the providers' needs.
- Achieving effective implementation of a certified EHR product.
- Enhancing clinical and administrative workflows to optimally leverage an EHR system's potential to improve quality and value of care, including patient experience as well as outcome of care.
- Observing and complying with applicable legal, regulatory, professional, and ethical requirements to protect the integrity, privacy, and security of patients' health information.
- Achieving state and federal standards for meaningful use of the electronic health record
- Using the electronic health record as a tool to view their total, population-based data on various clinical indicators, enhance their provision of care and improve the clinical outcomes for their entire patient population.

### The National Health Information Technology Extension Program

The National Extension Program established a network of Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers (Regional Extension Centers) to offer technical assistance, guidance, and information on best practices to support and accelerate health care providers' efforts to become meaningful users of EHRs. In total, the Regional Extension Centers will support at least 100,000 priority primary care providers (small practices and those serving safety-net populations), through participating non-profit organizations, in achieving meaningful use of EHRs and enabling the exchange of health information.

The Extension Program also established a national Health Information Technology Research Center (HITRC), funded separately, which will gather relevant information on effective practices from a wide variety of sources across the country and help the Regional Extension Centers collaborate with one another and with relevant stakeholders to identify and share best practices in EHR adoption, effective use, and provider support. The HITRC will build a virtual community of shared learning to advance best practices that support providers' adoption and meaningful use of EHRs.

Funding from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, in the form of cooperative agreements, for this program will be awarded in two cycles. The first cycle of awards, announced on February 12, 2010, provides \$375 million to create 32 Regional Extension Centers. The second cycle of awards is anticipated soon. Once fully funded, the program will exceed \$700 million. For more information, please visit <http://healthit.hhs.gov/programs/rec>.

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## HITECH Background

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009 seeks to improve American health care delivery and patient care through an unprecedented investment in health information technology. The provisions of the HITECH Act are specifically designed to work together to provide the necessary assistance and technical support to providers, enable coordination and alignment within and among states, establish connectivity to the public health community in case of emergencies, and assure the workforce is properly trained and equipped to be meaningful users of EHRs. Combined these programs build the foundation for every American to benefit from an electronic health record, as part of a modernized, interconnected, and vastly improved system of care delivery.

The HITECH Act amends Title XXX of the Public Health Service Act by adding Section 3012, Health Information Technology Implementation Assistance. This section provides supportive services for the rest of the HITECH Act. Section 3012 (a) establishes the Health Information Technology Extension Program (Extension Program) which consists of both the Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers (Regional Extension Centers) and the Health Information Technology Research Center (HITRC).

The HITECH Act also authorizes additional programs, initiatives, and regulations including those related to strengthening health information exchange, health IT innovation, the health IT workforce, Beacon communities, standards and certification, and the Medicare & Medicaid EHR incentive programs. Information on these initiatives can be found at <http://healthit.hhs.gov>.

## Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), within the Department of Health and Human Services, is the principal federal entity working to improve health care quality, safety, and efficiency through the promotion of health information technology and electronic health information exchange.

**Mission:** A health system that uses information to empower individuals to improve the health of the population.

**Vision:** To improve health and health care for all Americans through use of information technology.

Health IT Extension Program:  
<http://healthit.hhs.gov/programs/rec>

Health IT: <http://healthit.hhs.gov>

HITECH Programs: <http://healthit.hhs.gov/programs>

Health IT Buzz Blog: <http://healthit.hhs.gov/blog/onc>

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*In Partnership With: The Office of the National  
Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC)*

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*