

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Nebraska Receives Additional Funding To Accelerate Critical Access and Rural Hospitals'  
Switch To Electronic Health Records**

Wide River Technology Extension Center (TEC), the designated Regional Extension Center (REC) for Nebraska, received notice of funding from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) for an additional \$1,068,000 to assist with the transition from paper to EHRs for state's 66 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and small Rural Hospitals.

Dr. David Blumenthal, MD, MPP, National Coordinator for ONC announced an additional \$12 million in funding nationwide in new technical support assistance to help CAHs and small rural hospitals adopt and become meaningful users of certified health information technology.

The additional CAHs and small rural hospital funding will be administered through Wide River TEC. Wide River TEC offers a wide range of hands-on technical assistance, guidance and information on best practices to support and accelerate healthcare providers' efforts to become meaningful users of certified EHRs under the Medicare and Medicaid incentives programs. Wide River TEC is currently assisting almost 300 providers in Nebraska to help ease this transition to EHRs. Through an advisory role, Wide River TEC brings local expertise and support to primary care physicians and other healthcare providers with necessary technical assistance for successful EHR implementation.

"Critical access and rural hospitals are a vital part of our healthcare system. Health information technology can offer rural health care providers and their patients resources and expertise that may not be currently available in their communities. We recognize that the transition to electronic health records (EHRs) is a challenge and that rural facilities face even greater challenges to make the transition from paper to electronic records," Dr. Blumenthal said. "This additional funding recognizes the need to address these challenges and represents another important milestone in our commitment to critical access and rural hospitals throughout the country as they transition to EHRs."

The new funding is provided under the Health Information Technology Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The HITECH Act created the Medicare and Medicaid EHR incentive programs, which will provide incentive payments to eligible professionals, eligible hospitals, and CAHs that adopt and demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology. Incentives totaling as much as \$27.4 billion over 10 years could be expended under the program, which is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. In addition, the HITECH Act provided \$2 billion through ONC to support technical assistance, training and demonstration projects to assist in the nation's transition to EHRs.

Wide River TEC, a distinct business unit of CIMRO of Nebraska, was awarded a four-year cooperative agreement by the ONC in February 2010 with access to \$8,237,775 in grant funding conditioned upon achievement of specific milestones to assist Nebraska healthcare providers with EHR assistance. “We are thankful to ONC for providing this additional funding to assist Nebraska CAHs and small rural hospitals,” stated Greg Schieke, Senior Vice President of Wide River TEC. “We know there is great interest among rural Nebraska hospitals in adopting Health IT to improve the quality and efficiency of care. Wide River TEC will soon contact each CAH and small rural hospital to discuss their current state of IT adoption, and how we can work together to achieve a successful EHR implementation.”

For more information about Wide River TEC, visit [www.widerivertec.org](http://www.widerivertec.org). For more information on the REC program, visit <http://healthit.hhs.gov/programs/rec>.

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