

Wisconsin Receives One of Fifteen FLEX CAH HIT Network Program Grant

Awards: The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC), in partnership with the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health, has received a \$1.6 million grant to help build a shared hospital information system for rural hospitals in Wisconsin. The grant funding is from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration.

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative Information Technology Network (RWHC ITN) will serve hospitals and physicians by providing: (1) unified, integrated electronic information to support healthcare, (2) systems to reduce avoidable medication errors, and (3) robust and affordable electronic health record (EHR) applications and quality support to ensure their appropriate use.

St. Joseph's Health Services in Hillsboro, Tomah Memorial Hospital and Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County will be the first members of RWHC ITN. The new corporation will be affiliated with RWHC and organized as a non-profit cooperative owned by participating non-profit hospitals. Participation in the network will be open to all rural hospitals in Wisconsin. It is the vision of this initiative to create an affordable and fully-featured option for rural hospitals across the state, configured for a secure exchange of information to suit our consumers.

Consistent with Governor Doyle's Wisconsin eHealth Initiative goals, the RWHC ITN promises to dramatically increase EHR adoption in small and rural Wisconsin hospitals and physician practices. Following an initial implementation period, the organization intends to work with larger hospitals toward a regional data exchange that will further enhance patient safety and healthcare system efficiency for Wisconsin health providers and all Wisconsin residents. For more information, please call the RWHC Director of HIT, Louis Wenzlow, at (608) 644-3237, or e-mail at lwenzlow@rwhc.com.