

# NY Chapter 3 News

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## NYC Public Health Collaboration Helps Physicians Adopt IT

*NYC Regional Extension Center will promote electronic health records to modernize physician practices, promote patient-centered care, and improve health outcomes*

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Primary Care Information Project (PCIP), in partnership with the Fund for Public Health in New York (FPHNY), recently launched the NYC Regional Electronic Adoption Center for Health (REACH). REACH is one of 32 federally designated Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers recently announced by the Department of Health and Human Services.

REACH will encourage health IT adoption in physician offices and community health centers to coordinate care and improve health outcomes, specifically through the use of prevention oriented electronic health records (EHRs). Recognizing that purchasing, installing, and using an EHR requires a large investment of time and money, REACH will draw on the experience of PCIP staff members to assist physicians with EHR vendor selection, redesigning office workflows and implementation of software and new systems. REACH will also provide guidance for physicians to meet the federal requirements for meaningful EHR use. To date, over 2,500 NYC physicians, concentrated in medically underserved areas, have joined PCIP to take advantage of these services. With this federal grant, REACH will extend the program to more providers in New York City.

"We expect most physicians to adopt new technology in the coming years as a result of government support and an industry-wide need to modernize healthcare," said Assistant Commissioner Dr. Amanda Parsons, PCIP director and head of the new initiative. "REACH will offer unbiased, expert advice to make sure that when physicians adopt health IT, they follow best practices to actually improve health and care coordination. Without proper education, there is a danger that providers will invest time and money and end up with new computer systems that don't help care for patients any better than before."

Along with implementation services, REACH will offer one-on-one quality improvement training to help physicians track their patients' health and understand their own performance in keeping patients healthy. This is an important component of "Meaningful Use," a set of requirements for EHR use from the federal government. Physicians who meet these requirements may be eligible for incentive payments from Medicare or Medicaid up to \$63,750. Extension Centers are designed to help physicians understand and meet these criteria, which demand a deep understanding of EHR functions and close coordination with vendors and public health agencies.

As the largest community project of its kind, PCIP served as a model for the federal Extension Center program. Now, New York City will serve as a leader for other extension centers as they collaborate nationwide to modernize American healthcare.

Founded in 2005 with city funding, PCIP now runs several grant-funded projects in partnership with FPHNY which help physicians use EHRs to address public health priorities defined by the city's "Take Care New York" program. Pilot programs include Panel Management, which uses EHR data to identify at-risk patients and pro-actively manage their care, and Health eHearts, a pilot project that incentivizes physicians to use their EHRs for prevention to keep patients healthy. REACH members will have access to these programs and more as the organization pursues innovative programs that encourage patient empowerment and a payment structure that rewards good health.

## **EHR Meaningful Use Summit on May 14th**

PCIP is co-sponsoring a conference on Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. This conference will be the first time city, state and local agencies come together to discuss Meaningful Use, the federal, monetary incentives available to providers that adopt an HER. Visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/pcip/mu-summit.pdf> for more information.

Physicians interested in REACH can visit [nycreach.org](http://nycreach.org) for updates, or visit [nyc.gov/pcip](http://nyc.gov/pcip) to learn more. To join, email [pcip@health.nyc.gov](mailto:pcip@health.nyc.gov).