



CMS Awards First \$20 Million of \$100 Million to Help Small Practices Succeed in MACRA

Barbara J. Rogers

On February 17, 2017, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced its first round of awards of approximately \$20 million to eleven organizations for the first year of the five-year program, designed to provide on-the-ground training and education about the Quality Payment Program (QPP) for clinicians in individual or small group practices of fifteen clinicians or fewer.¹ Authorized by the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA), CMS intends to invest up to an additional \$80 million over the remaining four years. The contracts were awarded to the following organizations:

- Altarum
- Georgia Medical Care Foundation (GMCF)
- HealthCentric
- Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG)
- IPRO
- Network for Regional Healthcare Improvement (NRHI)
- QSource
- Qualis
- Quality Insights (West Virginia Medical Institute)
- Telligen
- TMF Health Quality Institute

These community-based organizations are tasked with providing customized hands-on training, at no cost, to help thousands of small practices, particularly those that practice in historically under-resourced areas, such as rural areas, health professional shortage areas, and medically underserved locations. Clinicians will receive assistance with all aspects of the program, including, for example, guidance on selecting and reporting on quality measures, supporting change management and strategic planning, and assessing and optimizing health information technology.

As Dr. Kate Goodrich, CMS Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Center for Clinical Standards and Quality stated, “[c]linicians in small and rural practices are critical to serving the millions of Americans across the nation who rely on Medicare for their health care. Congress, through the bipartisan [MACRA], recognized the importance of small practices and rural practices and provided the funding for this assistance, so clinicians in these practices can navigate the new program, while being able to focus on what matters most -- the needs of their patients.”

The MACRA-authorized funding is one aspect of a multi-level outreach effort to help clinicians understand the new QPP. CMS has offered various training and education since the QPP Final Rule was released last October, including webinars and in-person presentations. Additionally, through the established Quality Innovation Networks, the Transforming Clinical Practice Initiatives, and the Alternative Payment Model Learning Systems, every clinician in the QPP can receive in-person training, including information about the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), as well as the Alternative Payment Model (APM) track.

¹ Clinicians are defined as a Physician, Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, or Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist.

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