



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security to Fund \$24 Million in Contracts for Electronic Medical Records

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today announced the availability of \$24 million in contracts to provide the agency with electronic medical records to improve the efficiency of its disability programs. Through a Request for Proposals available on www.fedbizopps.gov, Social Security is looking for health care providers, provider networks, and health information exchanges to participate in its Medical Evidence Gathering and Analysis through Health Information Technology (IT) program.

“With these competitive contracts, Social Security continues to be a leader in the use of health IT to improve service to the American public,” Commissioner Astrue said. “This technology will greatly improve the speed and consistency of our disability decisions.”

The contract opportunities announced today are funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. They will require awardees, with a patient’s authorization, to send Social Security electronic medical records through the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN). The NHIN, a safe and secure method for receiving instantaneous access to electronic medical records, is an initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services and is supported by multiple government agencies and private sector entities.

Social Security is seeing a significant increase in disability applications as a result of the current recession. The agency expects to receive more than 3.3 million applications in fiscal year (FY) 2010, a 27 percent increase over FY 2008. To process these applications, the agency sends more than 15 million requests for medical records to health care providers. The use of health IT will vastly improve the efficiency of this process, which currently is largely paper-bound.

For nearly a year, Social Security has been successfully testing health IT to obtain electronic medical records. Disability applications processed with electronic medical records from the test sites in Massachusetts and Virginia have significantly reduced processing times.

More information on Social Security’s use of health IT is available at www.socialsecurity.gov/hit.

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