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## News Article



**Monday, May 26, 2014**



**Meaningful use means not just using our electronic health records and new technology, but using it in a way that truly helps our patients.**

**A:** “Meaningful use” requirements are the federal government’s way of making sure that health care providers not only *have* electronic health records, but they are also *using* them in a meaningful way. In order to meet the meaningful use requirements, hospitals and other participating providers (like physician practices) have to install a certified electronic health record (EHR) system and then show (“attest”) that they have successfully used the system for things like e-prescribing and recording laboratory and radiology results. There will be three stages of meaningful use requirements, with increasing complexity for each. Most providers in the United States have achieved stage 1 of meaningful use, and a few have moved on to stage 2. The rules for stage 3 have not been defined yet by the federal government. The rules for successful attestation of each step of meaningful use are very prescriptive, and we do not have a lot of flexibility in how we determine if we are compliant. We must follow the calculations and attestation process very deliberately or we cannot successfully attest that we are compliant.

**Q: Why is meaningful use important to Mountain States Health Alliance?**

**A:** Meaningful use is important to Mountain States because having an EHR system that works properly helps to improve patient safety and streamline patient care processes. The reason meaningful use requirements exist is because electronic health records can only work properly if the system is installed and used correctly.

The cost of implementing and deploying the technology required to successfully attest to meaningful use is significant – for Mountain States Health Alliance, it has cost millions of dollars. For this reason, the federal government has attached incentives to help reimburse the cost of this investment, and has also begun to apply penalties to health systems who choose not to invest in meaningful use. The penalties can add up to a 1-percent reduction in their Medicare reimbursement rates on top of the other cuts

## A message from our CEO: Let's talk 'meaningful use'

By Alan Levine  
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Dear Colleague:

You may have heard discussion throughout the health system recently using terms like “meaningful use,” and “attestation” related to our use of electronic medical records. These are important initiatives that are critical to our success as a health care system and our ability to provide the best service to our patients. Achieving our goals in this area is a shared responsibility between team members, organizational leadership and physicians, and we all have to do our part. I’d like to take a moment to share with you some of the basics of meaningful use and explain the role we each have in ensuring our success.

**Q: What is “meaningful use?”**

the providers have received.

**Q: Has Mountain States achieved meaningful use of our electronic health record?**

**A:** Partially, but we still have more work to do. We are proud to say that all Mountain States hospitals met the requirements for at least one year of stage 1 meaningful use. This means that we must now move on to stage 2. A few elements are new for us in stage 2, like OWL (Online Wellness Link), our patient portal that allows Mountain States patients to review a portion of their health records online. But most of the stage 2 requirements are the same measures, just with increased compliance rates. For example, in stage 1, at least 30 percent of patients who received medication had to have at least one of their medications ordered using CPOE (computerized physician order entry). In stage 2, more than 60 percent of all medications ordered at a facility must be done using CPOE. Most of our facilities are on track to meet all requirements for CPOE, but it's important to make sure our use of CPOE *stays* above the threshold and continues to rise.

**Q: What can I do to help my hospital or outpatient practice achieve stage 2 of meaningful use?**

**A:** I'm glad you asked!

- Take advantage of training offered by Organizational Development, both in the form of classes and CBLs on TEDS.
- Tell our patients about OWL and encourage them to sign up. Explain that OWL is a free benefit that allows them to participate in their health care. OWL is not a 90-day strategy, but a permanent part of our service line that will continue to grow.
- If you are a physician or mid-level provider, always enter orders electronically when possible.
- When prompted by Soarian or Allscripts, collect all regulatory information requested, including preliminary cause of death where appropriate.
- Encourage patients to take advantage of new features of OWL as they become available, like secure messaging with physicians and appointment requests. Look for more information on these enhancements in the next couple months.
- Educate yourself about the specifics of stage 2 meaningful use by visiting these sites:
  - General info on stage 2 from CMS: <http://go.cms.gov/1dP2GFD>
  - Details of core measures for physicians and other eligible professionals: <http://go.cms.gov/QQETzl>
  - Details of core measures for hospitals: <http://go.cms.gov/1n1AVD0>

Thank you for what you are doing every day to serve our patients and give them the best care possible. With your help, we can give our patients the best that electronic health record technology has to offer while improving their patient experience and empowering them to become involved in their own health care.

Thank you,

Alan Levine, President & CEO, Mountain States

