Behavioral health IT adoption and care integration

Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission
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Incentives have helped increase adoption of electronic health records

As part of the HITECH Act in 2009, significant investments were made to incentivize electronic health record (EHR) adoption

$35B allocated for Medicaid and Medicare incentive programs encouraging hospitals and providers to adopt EHR systems

From the inception of the incentive programs in 2011 to 2015, EHR adoption increased 53 percentage points among U.S. non-federal acute care hospitals

Psychiatric hospitals lag behind other specialty hospitals in possession of Certified Electronic Health Record Technology

Office-based physicians practicing psychiatry lag behind other specialty physicians in EHR adoption

Incentive programs take effect

EHR adoption among behavioral health providers remains low primarily due to four factors

Most behavioral health provider types (psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, etc.) were ineligible for the federal incentive packages spurring adoption of EHR systems

Behavioral health providers have less incentive to adopt EHRs as they are typically not included in health information exchanges, which often serve as a catalyst for EHR adoption among other providers

Behavioral health providers are often unable to invest in the hardware, software, and training necessary for EHR adoption due to low operating margins

Behavioral health providers are subject to data-sharing regulations beyond Certified Electronic Health Record Technology requirements and may face challenges implementing compliant systems

Interoperable behavioral health solutions may help bridge the gap: a growing number of companies are offering solutions designed for interoperability with other provider types

Examples of companies with interoperable solutions


Source: “Integrating Clinical Care through Greater Use of Electronic Health Records for Behavioral Health”, MACPAC, June 2021
Increasing adoption of CEHRT among behavioral health providers could have wide-reaching benefits

Sources: "Integrating Clinical Care through Greater Use of Electronic Health Records for Behavioral Health", MACPAC, June 2021, "Behavioral Health Integration", SAMHSA

- Increase clinical integration and achieve cost savings
  - EHR adoption and information sharing among providers may promote coordinated care and in turn improve population health and healthcare value, a component of which is reduced costs

- Enable participation in value-based payment
  - EHR adoption may facilitate the development of attribution models to realize the captured value of behavioral health care savings and enable participation in value-based payment

- Improve the quality of health reporting
  - As the behavioral health field moves towards measurement-based care, supportive EHR systems are essential to improve the quality and availability of health reporting, and potentially ease the burden of reporting to state agencies or Medicaid MCOs
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