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Contact: Toniann Richard
Office: 660.259.9019 Cell: 816.807.7774
Toniann@HCCNetwork.org

HCC Awarded \$900,000 to Support Health Information Technology Efforts in Lafayette, Ray, Saline and Carroll Counties

Health care delivery in West Central Missouri just got a huge injection with \$900,000 in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County, one of only two rural health networks in Missouri to receive the grant award, will use these funds to help its provider partners implement electronic health records (EHR), health information technology, and support HIT staffing and technology consultants. The Rural Health Technology Network Development grant, awarded in conjunction with President Barack Obama's Rural Health Initiative, will support HIT programs in Lafayette, Ray, Saline and Carroll counties over the next three years. This pilot program, the first of its kind, includes 40 grant recipients throughout the U.S.

HCC provider partners participating in the program include Lafayette Regional Health Center, Pathways Community Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., I-70 Community Hospital, Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center Lafayette Family Medicine - Dental & WIC Services, Richmond Family Clinic, Carroll County Memorial Hospital and Fitzgibbon Hospital.

Closing the Chasm

Approximately 70% of grant funds will be used to purchase HIT hardware, software and telehealth medical equipment.

"As a rural health network, we see first-hand the challenges faced by area practitioners to provide quality patient outcomes while striving to keep pace with advances in health care," said Toniann Richard, the HCC's executive director. "These funds will be used to close the rural health chasm by implementing EHRs and enabling patients increased access to specialists, mental health providers and other core services right in their own communities."

Meaningful Use

The pilot program also addresses challenges that hinder area providers from adopting Meaningful Use, which requires them to use EHR and EMR (electronic medical record) technology in a manner that maximizes efficiencies for the patient and provider. By 2017, most all—if not all practitioners—are

expected to use EHRs and EMRs. Organizations that meet meaningful use guidelines will receive financial incentives. Those who do not will be penalized.

To support HIT adoption and circumvent potential meaningful use penalties, the grant will also equip providers with the following capabilities:

- Implement more seamless communication across provider networks
- Establish patient histories across multi-campus family practice clinics to eliminate duplication of services and tests, while increasing continuum of health care services
- Create interoperable network systems that allow data to be shared from one facility to the next

“What this means for the provider and the patient is increased health care efficiencies, reduced health care costs and reductions in emergency room utilization for ailments that could have been prevented,” Richard said.

About the HCC

The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County was formed under the Community Health Improvement Project model in 2006. Comprised of over 25 community organizations, HCC serves as the hub for health and wellness advocacy and is recognized as one of the premiere rural health care networks in the country. The HCC collaborates with area agencies, businesses and other non-profits to advocate for:

- **Workplace wellness** programs through the Rural Missouri Health Coop, which aims to create a healthier workforce and reduce insurance premiums;
- **Health information technology** initiatives to equip health care providers with the resources needed to offer telemedicine and telehealth services that increase patient access to quality health care;
- **Tobacco cessation and obesity prevention** through the Social Innovation for Missouri (SIM) grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health, as well as other programs.

To learn more, contact Toniann Richard at 660.259.9019 or visit HCCNetwork.org, WellnessWorks.HCCNetwork.org, 4everfit.HCCNetwork.org. You may also follow the HCC on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

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