



One of the first operational HIEs west of the Mississippi River: EKCITA, a rural RHIO, receives 501(c)(3) status

On Friday, April 17, East Kern County Integrated Technology Association (EKCITA) received notification of being approved by the IRS of federal tax exemption status. EKCITA, ***one of the first operational Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) west of the Mississippi River***, follows CareSpark and CalRHIO in receiving this IRS determination of non-profit status as a Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO).

Who is EKCITA?

EKCITA is a model Health Information Exchange for ***rural, small and underserved communities*** who are interested in engaging their community to exchange patient clinical data and utilize that data in a meaningful way for purposes of population health research and quality improvement initiatives. EKCITA has spent more than three years undergoing corporate structuring, developing governance, and addressing work flow issues to best fit the providers' practice needs. EKCITA provides guidance to organizations, communities, and regions on making decisions on entering the HIE highway.

Background

EKCITA was formed via a federal research initiative and through a grassroots community effort. Based in Tehachapi, California, the purpose of EKCITA is to demonstrate secure and appropriate sharing of electronic health files and clinical data for the purpose of public health, patient care, and research; and to develop, improve, and assist in the implementation of health information technology for all physicians, caregivers, health-related institutions and consumers in, but not limited to, SE Kern.

EKCITA is not a typical RHIO in that it also holds the licenses for the electronic health record (EHR) software solutions installed at various rural health clinics and private practices in the region; holds the license for a custom designed, web-based personal health record (PHR); and is responsible for the open source HIE system designed by the local providers. EKCITA's HIE will allow for not only the secure transmission of data, but will also support population based quality improvement and research studies.

At this time, EKCITA is comprised of a local critical access hospital, medical group, 6 private provider offices, and 3 rural health clinics. EKCITA is exchanging patient demographic information, encounter data, lab results, radiology transcription reports, and medication and allergy lists. The functionality of EKCITA's HIE is growing on a daily basis as lessons are learned to improve its process.

Join us in person or via webinar

As an initial step in expanding its network to other rural, small and underserved communities, EKCITA is holding a FREE educational summit to educate healthcare organization executives regarding "What the ARRA Means to You." It is imperative that providers understand the opportunities and requirements for the incentive payments for the meaningful use of electronic health records; and to engage with an HIE supporting the state of California efforts of receiving implementation funds.

To register for this event, [click here](#). Password for this FREE event is ARRA. Register now, space is limited. For additional information, contact Jami Young at jyoung@tvhd.org or 661-823-3057.