

Colorado Regional Health Information Organization (CORHIO)

www.corhio.org

CORHIO is a non-profit organization that facilitates health information exchange to improve care for all Coloradans. Created in 2007, CORHIO serves everyone including consumers, employers, doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, home health agencies, health plans and local health information exchanges that are interested in improving the health of all Coloradans through the use of health information technology. CORHIO provides collaboration/convening services to communities and **offers secure and confidential technical services where needed.**

Article in Denver, Business Journal 2/12/2010

The Colorado Regional Health Information Organization, a nonprofit created to help health care providers adopt and use health information technology, will get \$21.65 million in federal stimulus funds.

The funds announced Friday by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) and the [Department of Labor](#) are part of almost \$1 billion awarded across the country under the stimulus package to advance the adoption of IT in the health care field, where file cabinets filled with paper records are still commonplace, and to train workers for jobs in the areas of health care and information technology.

The money is expected to make IT available to more than 100,000 U.S. hospitals and doctors by 2014, and to train 15,000 people for IT jobs.

In Colorado, the Colorado Regional Health Information Organization, or CORHIO, will get \$9.175 million for work at the state level and another \$12.475 million to fund the Colorado Regional Extension Center, which will help health care providers implement and use information technology.

“Health information technology can make our health care system more efficient and improve the quality of care we all receive,” HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a statement. “These grant awards, the first of their kind, will help develop our electronic infrastructure and give doctors and other health care providers the support they need as they adopt this powerful technology.”

Article in Denver Business Journal 4/17/09

Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter charged a small nonprofit with the big responsibility of helping hospitals and doctors streamline their medical technology to share electronic medical records — a nationwide goal supported by President Barack Obama.

Founded in 2007, the [Colorado Regional Health Information Organization](#)'s (CORHIO) role is to help local health care providers get their hands on potentially hundreds of millions of federal stimulus dollars.

CORHIO also will provide consulting services to hospitals, doctors' practices and community health centers that want to qualify for billions of dollars in incentives the government offers for medical organizations to upgrade their technology.

The nonprofit will play a major role in Colorado's implementation of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH).

As part of the federal stimulus plan, HITECH will provide approximately \$36 billion for health information technology nationwide, with \$34 billion being distributed to qualified health care providers, and \$2 billion being made available to states and other agencies on a competitive basis for infrastructure and other technology improvements.

Colorado plans to use HITECH funds to establish a loan and grant program for providers that want to improve electronic health records, and to train health care professionals how to use the technology to improve their practices, according to Ritter spokesman Evan Dreyer.

Joanne Lindsay, a spokeswoman for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, said the state doesn't know how much money state health organizations will get or how the dollars will flow.

While the deal represents a breakthrough for the young nonprofit, it's not CORHIO's first major undertaking.

Late last year, CORHIO helped Denver Health, The Children's Hospital, University of Colorado Hospital and Kaiser Permanente of Colorado create an electronic system that lets doctors and nurses from those organizations share basic information about patient medications, diseases and medical tests — though the medical providers use different computers and software.

Phyllis Albritton, executive director of CORHIO, said the project was made possible through a \$5 million federal grant from the Agency for Health Research and Quality.

"The purpose of the system was to show that very sophisticated organizations that have different ways of integrating technology can send information across different organizations," Albritton said.

Obama supports improving the transmission of medical records because he believes it will reduce administrative costs and improve care. He's pledged to invest up to \$50 million in health-information exchange in the next few years. His predecessor, George W. Bush, set a goal of getting all health care providers on a health information exchange by 2014.

Obama has said the initiative is important because it will save lives, not just jobs.

"If I get hit by a bus and show up in an emergency room, I want people to know information about me and that the provider has as much information about me as possible to do the right thing," Albritton said.

Albritton said the system CORHIO helped develop already has saved lives. In its first week, the system showed that a patient who ended up in the University Hospital emergency room after a car accident was on a significant number of medications, she said.

"That changed the way that they treated her pain, and if they did it a different way, she might have had a bad reaction," Albritton said.

Along with patients, those who pay into the health care system — including businesses that provide health insurance, insurers and government plans such as Medicare and Medicaid — will benefit financially from health information exchange because of the efficiencies and improvements it creates, Albritton said.

Having demonstrated the system to the federal government, CORHIO now is confronted with the more ambitious task of tying together Colorado's health care organizations.

That fits into the even larger goal of tying together all health care organizations in the country.

"Health information exchange is larger than four institutions, and it's larger than just the Denver metro area," Albritton said. "So our mission is very broad across the state."