

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: EHR Hardship Exception Application Doesn't Prevent You From Meeting MU Requirements

Plus: 12.7 million Americans chose healthcare plans through the Health Insurance Marketplaces.

If you've submitted an EHR hardship exception, you might be thinking you have to kiss an incentive payment goodbye—but fortunately, you'd be wrong.

In a new FAQ on the CMS website, the agency says that you can have the best of both worlds. "Submission of a hardship exception application does not prevent a provider from attesting and receiving an incentive payment if meaningful use requirements are met," CMS says.

To attest for the EHR Incentive Program, you must submit your application by March 11, and if you successfully attest, you won't face the payment adjustment next year. In addition, you "may also be eligible to receive an EHR Incentive payment," CMS adds.

If, however, you can't attest for the 2015 reporting period or you're afraid your attestation might not be successful, you can apply for a hardship exception by March 15 to avoid the payment adjustment in 2017. If, however, your attestation does go through, you can still earn an incentive.

Resource: To read more about hardship exceptions, visit <https://questions.cms.gov/faq.php?faqId=14357&id=5005>.

In other news...

After a very shaky start with the Health Insurance Marketplaces in 2013, it seems that the system is moving along quite smoothly now. When Open Enrollment ended on Jan. 31, about 12.7 million Americans had selected plans, including 3.1 million people who signed up through their state marketplaces and another 9.6 million through the Healthcare.gov site, CMS announced on Feb. 1.

This year saw the addition of four million new consumers to the marketplace, while another 5.6 million returned from last year. In addition, CMS noted, more 18 to 34 year olds joined the Marketplace than last year, comprising nearly one-third of new consumers in the program.

Resource: For more data on the latest HealthCare.gov enrollment numbers, visit <https://blog.cms.gov/2016/02/05/open-enrollment-trends-selected-healthcare-gov-statistics-prior-to-the-final-enrollment-deadline>.