



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security to be First Government Agency to Use Nationwide Health Information Network

The Social Security Administration announced today that it will be the first government agency to utilize the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN). Beginning in early 2009, Social Security will receive medical records for some disability applicants electronically through the NHIN gateway.

“Social Security is proud to be a leader in the use of health information technology,” said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security. “This safe and secure method for receiving electronic medical records will allow us to improve our service to the public by cutting days, if not weeks, off the time it takes to make a disability decision.”

Through the NHIN, Social Security will have instantaneous access to medical records. This will significantly shorten the time it takes to make a disability decision and make the process more efficient. Social Security uses individual medical records when making a decision for more than 2.6 million people who apply for disability each year. To make those decisions, Social Security relies on doctors, hospitals, and others in the healthcare field to provide medical records in a timely fashion. The NHIN will help ensure records are received timely by making it easier and less labor-intensive for medical professionals to submit records.

Social Security is working with MedVirginia, the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance, and Kaiser Permanente to implement the NHIN. In early 2009, the first real-world use of the system will begin between Social Security and MedVirginia.

The NHIN is an initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services and is supported by multiple government agencies and private sector entities. Please go to www.hhs.gov/healthit/healthnetwork/background/ for more information.

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