

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **South Florida Awarded National Health Information Technology Funding**

Miami, FL – On February 12, Kathleen Sebelius, Health and Human Services Secretary, announced that South Florida was awarded \$8.5 million in federal funding to establish a South Florida Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center (SFREC). The South Florida area was one of 32 regional extension centers awarded nationwide as part of the nearly \$1 Billion Recovery Act Investment in advancing the use of Health Information Technology. The SFREC will support health care professionals in Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties with the adoption of electronic medical records. “Health information technology can make our health care system more efficient and improve the quality of care we all receive,” said Secretary Sebelius.

The collaborative SFREC initiative includes doctors, hospital systems, medical groups, non-profit organizations, community health centers, universities and private foundations. The SFREC grant was awarded to not-for-profit Miami-based Health Choice Network, a nationally recognized leader in implementing the electronic health records. The co-applicant is the South Florida Health Information Exchange (SFHIE), which is led by the Health Foundation of South Florida. Other major partners include health care leaders Jackson Health System, Broward Health, Memorial Healthcare System, Florida Academy of Family Physicians, Miami Dade and Broward County Medical Associations, the Health Departments of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties, Miami-Dade Health Action Network, and the South Florida Hospital and Healthcare Association.

“The SFREC will promote the use of health information technology through education, training and technical support. The REC will also help to prepare healthcare professionals to take advantage of federal funding that will be available beginning in 2011 for implementation and support of electronic medical records,” said Kevin Kearns, President and CEO of Health Choice Network. Health Choice Network expects to add more than 40 employees during the next three years as the program moves forward. Workforce partners include University of Miami, Florida International University, Miami Dade College, Nova Southeastern University and Broward College.

“This unprecedented funding will position South Florida to use cutting-edge Health Information Technology to improve the health of our community, particularly for vulnerable patients,” said Robert Schwartz, M.D., Professor and Chair of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and Co-Chair of the SFHIE. “Medical professionals can improve health care by having access to the complete medical history of the patient. This includes medications, laboratory results and social and family history.”

The SFREC will initially target physicians and other health care professionals who focus on primary care including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics and OB/GYN. During the application phase, more than 1,800 primary care health professionals in the three counties expressed interest in participating in the SFREC. The SFREC will give technical assistance to providers as they integrate a system to support the electronic health record into their practice. The SFREC will coordinate group purchasing, system implementation, and privacy and security training.

“Health information technology has long been a strategic initiative of the Health Foundation of South Florida,” said Steve Marcus, CEO. “We are pleased to be a part of this exciting opportunity that supports the health care professionals in our community. Our ultimate goal is to improve the health care delivery to South Floridians.”

For more information on the South Florida Regional Extension Center, call  
(305) 471-8710 or email [info@southfloridaREC.org](mailto:info@southfloridaREC.org).

U.S. Health & Human Services press release may be viewed at  
[www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/02/20100212a.html](http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/02/20100212a.html)

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