If 30 percent or more of the total visits to your practice are from Medicaid patients, you are eligible for a total of $63,750 in Medicaid incentive payments (per licensed dentist). Medicaid incentive payments are made over six years with year one at $21,250, and the second through sixth years at $8,500 per year.

And so, you might ask, what is the catch? To qualify, you need to purchase and use a certified electronic health records (EHR) software program that has the ability to demonstrate a standard known as “meaningful use.” The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) created this standard of use requirement to help clinicians implement EHR software in ways that are helpful for private practice and public health quality improvement.

Unfortunately, virtually all of the qualifying EHR systems in today’s market are designed to run exclusively in medical offices. This simple fact has made it difficult for dentists to qualify for this government incentive. Fortunately, dental software companies are beginning to take notice. For example, DentiMax is on schedule to have its new dental EHR software certified and available by February 2013. The timing could not be better because most states will have met the Medicaid requirements to make this incentive available to their dentists in 2013.

Steps to Qualify
To qualify for the $63,750 Medicaid incentive, a dental office with sufficient Medicaid visits (again, 30 percent or more) must take the following steps:

1. Each qualifying dentist must adopt a software system that meets a certification standard from an Office of the National Coordinator – Authorized Testing and Certification Body (ONC-ATCB). When you purchase your EHR system, make sure it has this certification. If the software is not “ONC Certified,” you won’t qualify for the Medicaid incentive payments.

2. Following the acquisition and installation of the EHR software, register for the incentive program on the CMS Meaningful Use Web site (https://ehrincentives.cms.gov/hitech/login.action). After registration for the federal program, you also need to register on the state level. Go to your state Web site and
follow the directions provided there for registration. For a list of state Web sites, see www.cms.gov/apps/files/statecontacts.pdf.

3. After registering on both the federal and state levels, you must provide data that supports the 30 percent Medicaid patient requirement. You must show that, during any 90-day window in the calendar year, at least 30 percent of your patient encounters were patients covered by Medicaid. This population data is typically entered on your state’s department of health Web site (www.cms.gov/apps/files/statecontacts.pdf) (Fig. 1).

For each of the second through sixth years, to qualify for the $8,500 yearly payments, you must demonstrate the standard known as “meaningful use” – i.e., show you are using the technology in significant, specifically measurable ways. This standard can best be implemented if your software gives you access to what’s known as a Meaningful Use dashboard. This type of active reporting feature lets you quickly see how well you are meeting each of the meaningful use requirements. This tool has proven to be invaluable to doctors in the medical arena in helping them meet the “meaningful use standard.”

Meaningful use requirements read a lot like a Boy Scout merit badge. There are 25 objectives, 15 of which are required (core) and 10 are electives. You must meet 20 objectives to qualify for the incentive: the 15 core requirements and five of the electives (Fig. 2).

Some good news is that meaningful use may actually be easier for a dentist than for a primary care practitioner because of identified exclusions. One such exclusion is for the recording and chart changes in vital signs. Since dentists typically do not take this type of information, they might be exempt from this meaningful use core requirement. Those items where exclusions might apply are shown with a line through them in the following list of meaningful use requirements.

For more information on specific exclusions that might apply, see the information provided at: www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/EHRIncentivePrograms/downloads/EP-MU-TOC.pdf

If you are a periodontist, endodontist and/or maxillofacial surgeon who also sees Medicare patients, you might be eligible for incentives from Medicare.

**Summary**

Physicians have been actively implementing EHR software systems in their practices for years and are now the beneficiaries of the large associated government incentives. With software companies releasing EHR software designed for dentists,
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Qualifying for these government incentives has become much easier. If you see a significant number of Medicaid patients, you might be eligible for $63,750 in government incentives. The timing couldn’t be better for the dental community to take advantage of this opportunity. What are you waiting for?

For more information on this subject, see www.dentimax.com/EHR.

Author’s Bio

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