<u>**For Immediate Release**</u>

Regional Extension Center/EHR Association Collaboration Kicked Off with Well-Attended Web Conference

Washington, DC (May 24, 2011) The Regional Extension Center's (REC) Vendor Selection & Management Community of Practice (VS&M CoP) and the HIMSS Electronic Health Record Association (EHR Association) held its first public event on May 11, delivering on the commitment announced in February 2011 to collaborate in the interests of provider organizations seeking to adopt EHRs and achieve meaningful use.

This unprecedented alliance was launched during HIMSS11 in Orlando, FL, with the objectives of implementing best practices to help practice-based physicians and small clinics navigate the potential complexities of health information technology (HIT) selection and implementation. The partners agree that by identifying opportunities to simplify vendor selection, contract negotiation, and EHR installation and training, the ultimate beneficiary will be providers who rarely have the expertise or resources to dedicate to this important effort.

"We're excited about this important initiative to bring RECs and vendors closer together across regions, and to encourage consistency and best practices, "said Beth Schindele, Director of Quality Insights of Delaware, Regional Extension Center. "This will not only help us all to be more efficient, but ultimately the providers we serve will benefit," Ms. Schindele went on to say.

The web conference presented plans for a shared web portal for both vendors and RECs to post and access information, including vendor training materials, contract forms, and other tools to help RECs and their clients make the best EHR decisions for their environments. "We're finding the right balance between sharing proprietary information in a secure environment, and 'normalizing' information such as pricing models," said Justin Barnes, Vice President at Greenway and Chairman Emeritus of the EHR Association. "The new portal is currently being pilot tested, and we're anxious to learn from early users how we can make it more valuable. We hope to have it up and running in the next 30 days," Barnes concluded.

The REC VS&M CoP and the EHR Association will convene both web and in-person events over the next several months to get feedback from constituents so they can effectively serve their needs. "Our objective is to help our providers succeed as they take on EHR selection and implementation projects," said Travis Shank, Manager, Technical Assistance and Vendor Relations at Arizona Health-e Connection. "Vendors have expressed their commitment to collaborate with RECs in creating win/win opportunities that promote healthy competition and serve the public interest." Shank added.

"It's very encouraging to see this collaboration among the RECs and the vendors. Our shared customers, mostly practice-based physicians and small clinics, will appreciate our efforts to provide tools to make their decision-making, implementation, and training processes more efficient and effective," said Sue Popkes, Implementation Specialist at the Missouri Health Information Technology Assistance Center.

The May 11 event had more than 200 participants, with a roughly 50-50 split between commercial organizations and RECs, including providers, peer standards review organizations (PSROs), and other health IT suppliers. "We want to encourage participation in both the planning and management of this important alliance, as well as in providing us feedback on our work," Shank added. Barnes concurred, "We need everyone at the table if we're going to be successful. And we encourage *all* health IT suppliers, not just EHR Association members, to join our efforts."

The presentation that describes activities and resources to be provided to RECs is available at http://www.himssehra.org/ASP/index.asp. For more information about how to get involved, contact Pam Brewer, Program Manager, EHR Association at pbrewer@himss.org or forum@hitrc.org, to reach a REC representative.

About the Regional Extension Centers

The RECs are nonprofit organizations that receive subsidized funding from the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) to develop materials and provide technical assistance initially to priority primary care providers (PPCP) in the selection, implementation, and upgrades of EHR technology, enabling providers to meet Meaningful Use incentives. In performing their mission, 62 RECs are responsible for negotiating with EHR Vendors on behalf of 100,000 providers and leveraging the combined purchasing power of physicians they represent. RECs share tools, knowledge, and best practices through 14 Communities of Practice (CoP), one of which is the Vendor Selection and Management CoP. A primary goal of the VSM CoP is to educate providers on EHR Vendor Selection and to assist the providers in using their EHR systems in a way that will enhance the quality of healthcare delivered to patients. An advisory board of REC members governs each CoP where they invite the exchange of information via workgroup calls, onsite and web-hosted training, as well as the HITRC Portal (http://www.hitrc-collaborative.org)

About the HIMSS EHR Association

The HIMSS EHR Association is a trade association of 46 electronic health record (EHR) companies that join together to lead the health IT industry in the accelerated adoption of electronic health records in hospital and ambulatory care settings in the US. The Association provides a leadership forum for the EHR software provider

community to speak with a unified voice relative to standards development, the EHR certification process, interoperability, performance and quality measures, and other EHR issues as they become subject to increasing government, insurance and provider-driven initiatives and requests. Membership is open to HIMSS Corporate Members companies that design, develop and market their own EHRs. The Association is a partner of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and operates as an independent organizational unit within HIMSS. For more information, visit http://www.himssEHRA.org.

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