

South East Michigan Health Information Exchange (SEMHIE) Completes Contract With U.S. Social Security Administration for E- Disability Claim Filing



ANN ARBOR, MI, Jul 24, 2012 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) -- The South East Michigan Health Information Exchange (SEMHIE) announced today that it has officially completed all milestones under its multi-million dollar contract to provide its E-Disability Claim Filing Service to the U.S. Government's Social Security Administration (SSA). The infrastructure of this health information exchange can provide the basis for creating a comprehensive health information exchange for Southeast Michigan in the future.

Under this contract, SEMHIE has automated the process of filing Social Security disability insurance claims in the Detroit Metro Region, accelerating the process from an average of 457 days by paper to 6 hours electronically. SEMHIE's service automatically pulls health records and creates a comprehensive set of medical information that populates a Continuity of Care Document (CCD). Once the CCD is sent to SSA over the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN) of which SEMHIE is an approved member, decisions on these claims are being made by SSA, providing disabled citizens financial support on a much more timely basis and bringing increased federal dollars to the Detroit area. SEMHIE has been informed by SSA that it has met all key Milestones under the contract for its E-Disability Claim Filing Service. SEMHIE's service is in full production and since June 1st has processed 5% of all claims as required by the final milestone of its contract with SSA.

"Using health information technology will improve our disability programs and provide better service to the public," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security. "We've seen a significant increase in disability applications. To process them, the agency sends more than 15 million requests annually for medical records to healthcare providers. This largely paper-bound workload is generally the most time-consuming part of the disability decision process. The use of health IT will dramatically improve the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of this process, reducing the cost of making a disability decision for both the medical community and the American taxpayer." The contract awards are funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Dr. Rob Jackson, the Chairman of SEMHIE, stated, "This is very exciting for SEMHIE to have achieved. We have the foundation to offer more business services of benefit to our community."

SEMHIE's service, with a patient's authorization, sends SSA the specific electronic medical records required by SSA through the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN). The NwHIN is a safe and secure method for receiving access to the discrete data elements, values and text over the Internet. The NwHIN is an initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services supported by multiple government agencies and private sector entities.

For the past year, SEMHIE has been working with the Social Security Administration to successfully integrate SEMHIE's Service Oriented Architecture (SOA/Cloud) and infrastructure into the NwHIN to respond to an SSA query for information obtained from Electronic Medical Records systems (EHRs).

The funds from this contract award enabled Oakwood Healthcare System, a major hospital system that is a collaborative partner member of SEMHIE, to link its systems to the NwHIN. Ultimately, when additional funding is procured, it is anticipated that the other major hospital systems in the Detroit Metro area will perhaps use the same infrastructure to provide a similar service.

SEMHIE's service is now validated on the NwHIN and can process an electronic medical record in the CCD (Continuity of Care Document) format required through the NwHIN and from there, into SSA's data center. With the completion of all milestones under the contract, SSA has officially validated the SEMHIE service's ability to perform as designed. SEMHIE's Project Manager for the SSA Contract Michael M. Talley noted, "This is huge for the State of Michigan and is an indicator of the caliber of the work being done in our state in health information exchange."

Paula Fusco Smith, SVP & CIO of Oakwood Healthcare System and the Vice Chairman of the board of SEMHIE, stated, "This is a great step for Southeast Michigan and the SEMHIE organization. Oakwood is excited about being one of the leading health systems to initiate the health information exchange between the healthcare providers and Social Security Administration."

The SEMHIE CCD NwHIN gateway service interoperates with the web-services systems at Oakwood Healthcare System, so that the health system can transmit a patient's electronic medical records that are required to complete a "query for information" application for social security disability with SSA. Patients have a strong incentive to use the service, because they won't have to wait the typical year and a half to have their application adjudicated by SSA. The health system will reduce the amount of uncompensated care by participating in this gateway, since most applicants for social security disability insurance are unable to work and are unemployed.

SEMHIE's strategic IT collaborative partners in the SSA project are CNSI and CSC. These are two of the four entities which built the NwHIN for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Architects and technicians at CSC and CNSI worked with SEMHIE's experts, including Program Manager Michael M. Talley and Clinical Architecture, OpenAirWare and Dr. Gary Assarian to architect the solution proposed to SSA.

Cathy Cimino, CSC Project Manager, stated, "The completion of the final milestone is a tremendous achievement for SEMHIE. It demonstrates the successful leveraging of technology in a way that helps a large number of people. CSC is proud to be part of this initiative."

CNSI's Senior Vice President Sharif Hussein stated, "CNSI is proud to have served as a strategic partner and systems integrator to SEMHIE. Our team led the development and implementation of the solution which will improve access to healthcare services across the State of Michigan. We are excited about taking our Health Information Exchange solution and leveraging this technology nationwide for agencies and organizations to take the first step in creating a secure health records exchange."

About South East Michigan Health Information Exchange (SEMHIE)

Southeast Michigan Health Information Exchange is a diverse member driven non-profit multi-stakeholder consortium whose membership includes major health systems in the Detroit Metro Region (including Beaumont Hospitals, Detroit Medical Center, St. John Health System, Oakwood Healthcare System, and Trinity Health), payers, employers, providers, quality organizations, safety-net providers and healthcare professional associations. SEMHIE is leveraging existing and additional technologies across health care settings to improve information process flow, continuity of care, and to accelerate improvement in the quality and safety of care. By decreasing costs while improving the quality of care, SEMHIE will become a self-sustaining health information exchange serving Southeast Michigan. For more information see www.semhie.org , or contact Dr. Robert Jackson at rjacksonwwp@gmail.com or 313-386-5500.

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