

Governor Quinn Announces \$1.3 Million to Improve Healthcare in Underserved Areas of Illinois

Written by Leslie Wertheimer
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Federal Funding will Upgrade Health Information Technology for 1,600 Providers Across the State

CHICAGO – December 1, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today announced that \$1.3 million in federal funding was awarded to three Illinois not-for-profit organizations to help them upgrade health information technology services in underserved areas of the state. The grants made possible by the Illinois Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT) as part of its White Space Grant Program will connect providers in the Metro-Chicago area, Central and Southern Illinois. The OHIT anticipates the grants will enable more than 1,600 individual providers to connect with more than 48 health care organizations serving hundreds of thousands of patients every year.

“Upgrading our health information technology network is a critical part of our efforts to transform our health care system into one that focuses on wellness and keeping people healthy through better preventive care,” Governor Quinn said. “Improving communication among providers is a key to this transformation. These grants are another important step in the direction of a fully connected Illinois and better patient care.”

Federal health officials refer to “White Space” health care providers as those who are practicing in areas that are currently underserved by health information technology infrastructure.

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The three grants totaling \$1.3 million will be awarded to:

1. Heartland Health Outreach, the Alliance of Community Health Services and the Chicago Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center (CHITREC) in Chicago. Grant amount: \$500,000.
2. The Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network in Princeton. Grant amount: \$495,120.
3. Southern Illinois Healthcare in Carbondale. Grant amount: \$338,600.

Funding for these grants is made possible through the \$18.8 million in federal funding awarded to Illinois in 2010 under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act as part of the HIE Cooperative Agreement Program. Illinois is using the funding to implement the Illinois Health Information Exchange (ILHIE), a network for the secure sharing of clinical and administrative data among health care providers across the state.

The ILHIE will allow for better care coordination among providers, reduced medical errors and duplicative tests, controlled health care costs, and improved health outcomes. The White Space grants will fill in gaps throughout Illinois and connect organizations to health information exchange services that would not otherwise be able to connect.

“Illinois’ health information exchange network is only as strong as the volume and geographic diversity of providers connected to it,” OHIT Director Laura Zaremba said. “Through these projects we are connecting providers in communities that need our assistance the most.”

“Illinois is in an outstanding position to be a national leader in health information exchange for many years to come,” added ILHIE Authority Executive Director Raul Recarey, who will be working closely with these and other providers all across Illinois. “This is an opportunity to leverage our federal funding in a way that promotes connectivity and improves health care quality and care coordination among providers.”

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For additional information about health information exchange in Illinois please visit the ILHIE website at <http://hie.illinois.gov> .

About the Illinois Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT)

and the Illinois Health Information Exchange (ILHIE)

The [Illinois Health Information Exchange](#) (ILHIE) is a statewide, secure electronic transport network for sharing clinical and administrative data among health care providers in Illinois. The ILHIE allows providers to exchange electronic health information in real time and in a secure environment to improve health care quality and patient care. The Illinois Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT) is working with the ILHIE Authority to support its development.

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