

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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National Rural Health Information Technology Workforce Summit Addresses Challenges and Change

The National Rural Health Information Technology (HIT) Workforce Summit will be held Tuesday, September 22, 2009 in Washington, DC in conjunction with National HIT Week. The Summit will bring together key stake holders including educators, state offices of rural health, health and information technology (IT) organizations, rural providers, and federal agencies who can provide input and guidance on rural HIT workforce challenges.

Unprecedented change is sweeping the health care industry as it begins to move toward the broad adoption of HIT. In response to new national mandates, health care organizations have been scrambling to grasp the technical, financial, policy, and work flow issues surrounding the ‘meaningful use’ adoption of information technology.

Compounding on those challenges, the health care industry is facing increasing difficulty acquiring the workforce in multiple areas of expertise to meet the impending demand. While the demand is increasing for HIT professionals and HIT educated clinicians, the national supply of students enrolled in our nation’s nursing, medicine, health care, health information management (HIM), computer science, and information technology programs have been diminishing or not keeping pace with demands over the past five years.

The National Rural HIT Workforce Summit will work to identify rural HIT workforce shortage issues, as well as develop an understanding of the gaps in rural HIT workforce, and what needs to be done to reduce or eliminate those gaps. The meeting will result in recommendations for policy makers to support HIT workforce development efforts and funding; provide input on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and other federal/state opportunities to support HIT workforce development; define resources needed for successful rural HIT implementation and recommend methods for tracking national HIT workforce data.

The Summit is being coordinated by the Rural Health Resource Center for the National Rural HIT Coalition.* Sponsors of the Summit include: National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, Rural Health Resource Center, Stratis Health and the Texas Organization of Rural and community Hospitals.

(*The Rural HIT Coalition is a network of rural and health information technology leaders from regional, state, national and federal organizations, working together to advance the implementation of health information technologies (HIT) across rural America.)

News Contact:

Sally Buck, Associate Director
Rural Health Resource Center
(218) 727-9390 x 225
sbuck@ruralcenter.org