

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Hawaii Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program
Hawaii State Office of Rural Health, Hawai'i State Department of Health
PO Box 1675, Honokaa, HI 96727
Phone: 808.775.8883 Fax: 808.775.8889
Email: scott.daniels@doh.hawaii.gov

The Hawaii Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (FLEX), through the Hawaii State Office of Rural Health (HSORH), has been instrumental in ensuring access to quality healthcare in the rural areas of Hawaii. Through the FLEX program HOSRH has worked closely with the critical access hospitals (CAH) on issues of performance, quality improvement, and health information technology (HIT) development.

Electronic health record (EHR) systems are an integral component of the HIT that CAHs and other rural health care providers in Hawaii are seeking to implement. EHR systems are a critical component in ensuring quality care, patient safety, and cost-effectiveness in the complex modern healthcare environment. Currently, none of the CAHs in Hawaii has implemented an EHR. As with many CAHs in other states, CAHs in Hawaii are facing many barriers toward implementing an EHR. These barriers include the cost of EHR planning and implementation, the lack of information technology (IT) personnel in rural communities, and the absence of interoperability standards and systems that enable the exchange of patient information.

This FLEX CAH HIT Network Implementation application, submitted by the Department of Health of the State of Hawaii, the Kauai Region of the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation, and the Telecommunications and Information Policy Group of the University of Hawaii as partners, seeks to implement the open source version of the VistA EHR system for two Critical Access Hospitals and four clinics that are part of the HHSC Kauai Region Network. The project will establish a continuity of care and improve quality, patient safety, and cost-effectiveness.

The project seeks to (1) develop necessary enhancements to the existing VistA EHR system, and establish infrastructure in areas with limited or no connectivity to improve the accessibility of clinical information and results for clinicians; (2) implement security protocols in the VistA EHR to enable the HHSC Kauai Region network authorized access to patient records; (3) implement chronic disease care management tools to improve disease management and patient care; (4) develop application interfaces with patient management and billing systems to improve efficiencies; (5) develop internal resources to further deploy and sustain EHR implementations in Hawaii; (6) evaluate the implementation and usability of the EHR to provide lessons learned for future VistA (or other EHR) implementations.

The project has a well-developed and achievable strategic and implementation plan; builds on and optimizes a Hui OpenVista system implemented through funding provided by the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense and the Vista Office EHR developed by the CMS; and leverages the expertise and resources of the Partners.