

Meaningful Use...

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have developed incentive programs to help hospitals and doctors (providers) establish and use electronic health records. Many experts believe that this will lead to improved patient care. To receive these incentive payments, hospitals and providers have to show that they are “meaningfully using” technology by meeting goals for a number of specific performance measures. These incentive programs are offered to providers who participate in either the Medicare and or Medicaid (Medi-Cal) programs.

Currently, the incentives are set up in three different stages. Each Meaningful Use (MU) stage is more advanced than the previous stage in how the technology is implemented and applied to provide patient care:

- **MU Stage I:** helps providers develop basic methods for capturing and sharing patient care information
- **MU Stage II:** helps providers use the patient care data to better communicate patient care information with other providers
- **MU Stage III:** helps providers use this information to actually show improvements in the care of patients.

These Meaningful Use Stages are being phased in to allow hospitals and providers time to acclimate to the changes before moving to the next stage. It is important to note that hospitals and providers, who do not meet the Meaningful Use criteria by 2015, will start being penalized on reimbursements from Medicare and MediCal. NMC has already met MU Stage I, **year 1** and is planning to apply for MU Stage I, **year 2** in September 2014, before moving immediately into MU Stage II.