

Advancing Health Information Technology

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DSU's dedication to technological advancement can be seen in every area of study and research on campus, including the Center for the Advancement of Health Information Technology (CAHIT).

"We assist medical practices in a variety of ways," said Kevin Atkins, Director of CAHIT.

Examples of this include providing assistance with the setup and implementation of their electronic health record (EHR), helping them with workflow optimization to better utilize their EHR, and helping them access the data within their EHR.

CAHIT is a self-funded agency that earns funding through grants and contracts. They've had several partnerships throughout the years.

"From 2009 to 2014, HealthPOINT, a service entity under the umbrella of CAHIT, served as a federally funded and federally designated health information technology resource and support center, also known as South Dakota's HIT Regional Extension Center (REC)," Atkins explained.

The REC was one of 60 regional extension centers across the nation designated to provide free technical assistance, guidance, and best practices to support and accelerate South Dakota's medical providers as they implemented and became meaningful users of EHR technology. Through this program they worked with small rural primary care providers and critical access hospitals. Some of the services they provided were conducting practice readiness assessments, change management, project management, and HIPAA security risk assessments.

In 2015 the funding for REC ended, however through relationships established while serving as the REC, CAHIT learned of a CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) Innovation Center funding initiative called Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative.

CAHIT partnered with Iowa Healthcare Collaborative as a subcontractor, received funding and founded Compass Practice Transformation Network (PTN).

"Through Compass PTN, HealthPOINT provided support to North and South Dakota primary and specialty care clinicians to achieve sustainable and quality care practices to improve health outcomes for patients, improve care coordination through connectivity, better engage patients and families in their care, improve patient, clinician, and staff satisfaction, and reduce the overall cost of care," Atkins said. "In addition to raising performance scores on several quality indicators, our work resulted in a healthcare cost savings of roughly \$2.4 million for North and South Dakota. Combine this with similar

performances by the other six or so member organizations and you can see that the Compass PTN work was a great success.”

Additionally, CAHIT has contracts with healthcare organizations and the South Dakota Departments of Health and Social Services. They provide services related to the HIPAA security rule, application development, and technical support work.

“It is through these external contracts that we can do great work; like helping Huron Clinic increase their percentage of patients with controlled high blood pressure from 67% to 92% in 18 months,” Atkins stated.

CAHIT currently has five eight full-time employees, five of whom are contracted to other organizations. Three employees work with South Dakota Department of Health, staffing South Dakota Health Link (South Dakota’s Health Information Exchange) and are housed in MadLabs. Another works in Pierre with the South Dakota Department of Social Services as a data analyst in the Medicaid division. The fifth employee works with the South Dakota Department of Health at the state health laboratory in Pierre, helping with public reporting areas such as electronic lab reporting and syndromic surveillance. The remainder of CAHIT employees are housed in MadLabs and work on various health IT related projects.

“We are routinely looking for opportunities to partner with internal and external clients,” Atkins shared.