



33 W Monroe, Suite 1700  
Chicago, IL 60603  
[swillis@ehra.org](mailto:swillis@ehra.org)  
Phone: 312-915-9518  
Twitter: @EHRAssociation

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October 26, 2018

Daniel R. Levinson  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
330 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Attention: OIG-0803-N

Dear Mr. Levinson,

On behalf of the 35 member companies of the Electronic Health Record Association (EHRA), we are pleased to offer our comments to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of Health and Human Services on its request for information on safe harbors to the Anti-Kickback Statute and the exceptions to the beneficiary inducements CMP definition of “remuneration.” We appreciate this opportunity to provide input on OIG’s efforts to advance coordinated care.

EHRA members serve the vast majority of healthcare organizations that use electronic health records (EHRs) and other health information and technology (IT) to deliver high quality, efficient care to their patients. Established in 2004, EHRA operates on the premise that the rapid, widespread adoption of health IT has and will continue to help improve the quality of patient care as well as the productivity and sustainability of the healthcare system. Our core objectives focus on collaborative efforts to accelerate health IT adoption, enhance usability of EHRs, advance interoperability, and improve healthcare outcomes through the use of these important technologies.

EHRA supports efforts to modernize the Anti-Kickback Statute in order to improve provider participation in value-based payment models. Specifically, we believe any risk-bearing entity under an alternative payment model (APM) that qualifies as an Advanced APM under the Medicare Quality Payment Program (QPP) should be eligible to be a donor of EHR technology and services under the exceptions to the physician self-referral law and the Anti-Kickback Statute.

Similarly, any provider participant in an APM that qualifies as an Advanced APM under the QPP should be eligible to receive donations under the exceptions of either the

self-referral law or the anti-kickback statute. EHRA believes CMS has the authority to consider including recipients such as post-acute care providers, skilled nursing facilities, long-term care hospitals, intermediate rehabilitation facilities, physician practices, and home health agencies in the definition of “recipient” under the anti-kickback statute exception.

### **Cybersecurity-Related Items and Services**

EHRA echoes the concerns noted in the HHS Cybersecurity Task Force Report that under the current Stark Law, and believe those concerns are equally applicable to the Anti-Kickback Statute. Vulnerabilities exist due to the legal prohibition on larger healthcare organizations or technology developers helping smaller organizations and physician practices to purchase cybersecurity software, training, hardware and operational services.

Because cybersecurity is so dependent on all the players in the networked industry, even organizations that put strong cybersecurity policies and software in place are vulnerable due to connections with less-secure providers. Therefore, the task force asked Congress to amend the Stark Law and Anti-Kickback Statute to allow healthcare organizations to help physicians implement cybersecurity software, much as they have with electronic health records.

EHRA recommends an exception to the Anti-Kickback Statute to allow for the subsidization of cybersecurity needs such as cybersecurity software, cybersecurity hardware, cybersecurity training, tools for threat information sharing, and hardware. Additionally, we recognize that having the right tools is not enough and that updates to the Anti-Kickback Statute should make exceptions for services such as operational support, IT assistance, penetration testing, and other skilled services to aid smaller organizations with deployment and maintenance of these cybersecurity solutions.

### **Intersection of Physician Self-Referral Law and Anti-Kickback Statute**

To encourage adoption of interoperable EHR technology for all types of providers that participate in Medicare, we recommend that two key provisions be made as exceptions under the Anti-Kickback Statute:

1. Any risk-bearing entity under an alternative payment model (APM) that qualifies as an Advanced APM under the Medicare Quality Payment Program (QPP) should be eligible to be a donor of EHR items and services under the exceptions to the physician self-referral law and the anti-kickback statute. We believe CMS and OIG have this authority already, without need for further statutory authorization.
2. Any provider participant in an APM that qualifies as an Advanced APM under the QPP should be eligible to receive donations under the exceptions of either the self-referral law or the anti-kickback statute. We believe CMS has the authority to consider including recipients such as post-acute care providers, skilled nursing facilities, long term care hospitals, intermediate rehabilitation facilities, physician practices and home health agencies in the definition of “recipient” under the anti-kickback statute exception.

We believe the definition of eligibility of which EHR items and services can be donated could align with the donation provisions and qualifications that are already established under the physician self-referral law and anti-kickback statute exceptions.

EHRA members look forward to continuing to work with you and to continuing the discussion on these important issues. Please contact Sarah Willis-Garcia, EHRA Program Manager, at [swillis@ehra.org](mailto:swillis@ehra.org) or 312-915-9518 with questions or for more information.

Sincerely,



Cherie Holmes-Henry  
Chair, EHR Association  
NextGen Healthcare



Sasha TerMaat  
Vice Chair, EHR Association  
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#### About the EHR Association

Established in 2004, the Electronic Health Record (EHR) Association is comprised of more than 30 companies that supply the vast majority of EHRs to physicians' practices and hospitals across the United States. The EHR Association operates on the premise that the rapid, widespread adoption of EHRs will help improve the quality of patient care as well as the productivity and sustainability of the healthcare system as a key enabler of healthcare transformation. The EHR Association and its members are committed to supporting safe healthcare delivery, fostering continued innovation, and operating with high integrity in the market for our users and their patients and families.

The EHR Association is a partner of HIMSS. For more information, visit [www.ehra.org](http://www.ehra.org).