

ASPA EHR Facilitation Service

FAQs



FAQs Regarding the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service

We expect there are many questions around the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service. We have anticipated many questions and have given answers in hopes of helping you make an informed decision. We have categorized them based on main topical areas. Please note, a more detailed FAQ that will include a physician collaboration area for questions, comments, discussion etc. is being created on a dedicated ASPA EHR Facilitation Service website. This website will go live on July 15, 2011 and will allow member physicians to securely communicate with their peers and the ASPA EHR Facilitation team.

Questions regarding the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service

Why are you establishing preferred EHR systems? Why can't I just pick what I want?

First, you can absolutely pick whatever EHR system you want, (as long as it is a "Meaningful Use" certified system), and will be able to take advantage of the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service. We do not try to restrict you in any way. However, there are many very good reasons to take advantage of the ASPA preferred EHR systems. The selected EHR system vendors have agreed to cooperate and integrate to the extent possible with the ASPA Community Portal and the clinical integration services of InTUUN. This will increase the simplicity of your EHR installation and add clinical value in many ways as further described in these FAQs. Additionally, the preferred EHR vendors have given pricing concessions and committed to other contractual and financial considerations that are of value to you. However, in the end, it is your choice.

What do I get as part of this service?

You get as much or as little as you need. We are selecting EHR vendors who agree to offer financial and clinical benefits to your practice, or you can choose your own EHR vendor. We offer you the opportunity to be part of a large coordinated project such that you can take advantage of program services and shared capability that would otherwise be costly for a small practice. You can leverage the shared benefits and complement those benefits with any practice-specific services you may want to acquire, including: clinical workflow design to take maximum benefit of the EHR functions, reengineering of your operational practices, integration to your existing practice management system, implementation of a new practice management system, practice-specific configuration of encounter data presentation and content, EHR template design, customized forms development, computer hardware upgrades or new purchases, configuration of your hardware and software and much more. How much, or how little, is your choice.

What is the REC I keep hearing about?

The Regional Extension Center, or REC, is a non-profit organization that has received government funds to help providers with their EHR implementation projects, but only if they meet a priority provider designation. REC services are available to primary care providers operating in practices with fewer than 10 physicians, but are not available to specialists at all. Given that ASPA has more than two thirds of its membership in specialist practices the benefit is somewhat limited to our members. The REC provides services to help you with the selection and implementation in your practice. However, to be clear, the REC can never do all of your work for you. You are offered discounted, or in some cases free services to help you and are given some general education, guidance

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and tools to help you with the process. You receive no money from the REC. As a practice, you are expected to staff and manage your own EHR project with your staff or another 3rd party. You must still pay the EHR vendor and other computer hardware and software vendors for their products and services. You must also manage the vendors directly or pay a 3rd party to implement the software and configure it to meet your needs. Additionally, you must pay the vendor or a 3rd party for any customization for your practice specific needs and for all training related to the EHR. The REC can do some of these additional services but you will be charged. It is not part of their free service. More detailed questions surrounding the REC are discussed later in this FAQ.

How does this ASPA service differ from what the REC is offering?

The REC provides a valuable service for primary care physicians. However, the REC has a limited and fixed amount of funds to offer their services. They have limited staff capacity and supplement this with educational materials and other supporting materials to help you. They provide project management support for your team and a variety of other support services, but you must manage the project. In short, the REC augments your overall project activities. You must still manage your own project, select your EHR vendor, configure, and customize the EHR for your needs. The REC specifies that many services they can provide will have additional cost to you or you need to provide them yourself. For example, all hardware upgrades and implementation is your responsibility. Integration to your existing Practice Management system or implementation of a new Practice Management system is also outside of their scope. All integration and interoperability concerns are yours to manage. By contrast, our service provides everything as part of an integrated comprehensive service. We are not working on a limited basis and augmenting your capacity. Our goal is to deliver every aspect of your needs in close collaboration with you and your practice until all of your business and clinical needs are completed to your satisfaction. We are working to establish our ASPA EHR Facilitation Service team as a REC Technical Assistance Provider to you so we can seamlessly provide the REC services as well as the other comprehensive services. Please see our REC specific questions that give more detail about this.

I am a specialist and don't qualify for REC funds; how do I get the ARRA funds to pay for my EHR?

This is perhaps the most important question that most physicians ask regarding funding. The government funding, as provided for in ARRA, is a maximum of \$44,000 for Medicare-eligible physicians and \$64,000 for Medicaid-eligible physicians. However, no money is given to you for selecting and implementing an EHR. You must fund this yourself. The only way you get the government funding is through billing Medicare or Medicaid claims after you successfully implement the EHR and use it meaningfully in your practice. You must meet the requirements of Meaningful Use and submit attestations and/or reports that support this requirement. Based on this, you receive supplemental payments from the government, above and beyond your normal Medicare/Medicaid billings. This ARRA funding grant is intended to help you recover your previously-incurred costs. The supplemental Medicare/Medicaid payments continue over the course of 4 years until you receive the maximum ARRA amount. Also, please note this holds true for primary care physicians as well as specialists. The REC funding is only meant to defray a small portion of the overall costs of selecting, acquiring and implementing an EHR system in your practice. The majority of your cost recovery related to these expenses comes from the ARRA money, not the REC.

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My EHR vendor tells me they have all of the resources I need and they have the best knowledge. Why do I need you?

Your EHR vendor has financial incentive to meet their contractual commitments and move to the next client. The vast majority of an EHR vendor's profit is based on the license fee of the EHR and not on the implementation and training services. To that end, they want to get you implemented and move on. Once they have met their contractual commitments, they will depart quickly as there are many new clients to service. Further, because there are likely so many projects waiting in this current high-demand environment, they are charging a premium for their services. The EHR vendor's services are almost always priced at a premium. Finally, unless your vendor is in Phoenix, you will have travel related expenses to deal with.

The ASPA EHR Facilitation Service is staffed with experienced EHR resources who have implemented a wide variety of EHR systems and can meet all of your needs. We will be here before, during and after your implementation. Our resources are mostly local and we have rates that are well below market rates. Further, we are collaborating on common services such as training, configuration, project management and other key areas to share the cost across multiple practices so you do not bear the full cost.

If I select an EHR vendor that is not ASPA-approved, can I still take advantage of the ASPA Community Portal and other services from InTUUN?

Every ASPA member can take advantage of the InTUUN services as delivered through the ASPA Community Portal. There are many valuable services available through the ASPA Community Portal that any ASPA member can take advantage of irrespective of the type of EHR or whether they actually have an EHR at all. However, many of the more advanced capabilities and efficiency-related integration services will necessitate selection of an approved EHR to get the best and most elegant integration.

Are all of your selected ASPA-approved EHR vendors Meaningful Use Certified?

Yes. This is a prerequisite.

Are you suggesting that the ASPA-approved vendors are the best EHR vendors in the market?

No. It would not be correct for us to make that representation for two key reasons. First, there are many existing, new and emerging EHR vendors out there. For us to go through each EHR vendor's capabilities in order to make that level of validation and representation to you would be impractical. Second, and more important, it would be a major misrepresentation of our abilities to suggest that we can select what EHR system is best for you. No third-party organization can do this effectively unless they specifically represent you. Even then the decision must be yours. To make this representation on behalf of 2,400 physicians in differing practices is inappropriate. What we are suggesting is that the ASPA-approved EHR vendors have met Meaningful Use certification for Stage 1 and are making the appropriate representations for stages 2 and 3. The EHR vendors we have selected have the capability to support multiple specialties as well as primary care. Further, they have agreed in advance to provide financial, technical and operational benefits to ASPA physicians and have agreed to collaborate with ASPA in creating a greater level of integration with the ASPA Community Portal and the clinical integration services that are also provided for your benefit.

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I want to pick an EHR that is not yet certified, but will be. Will you still provide services to me?

No. We believe this is a dangerous and risky adventure for you and we can't participate in a project that has this level of risk before even starting. Meaningful Use is a big hurdle. Meaningful Use Stage 1 certification is significant in and of itself. However, under Meaningful Use, there are future stages of certification that your EHR vendor will also need to meet that are far more difficult. You could lose your funding as a direct result of shortcomings in your selected EHR. The commitment to Stage 1 is seen as the cost of entry to demonstrate EHR vendor commitment. If and when the EHR vendor does get certified, we will provide the complete set of EHR Facilitation Services offered if you request our help.

It seems that everyone focuses on primary care providers and the RECs. What about all of the specialists?

The ASPA EHR Facilitation Service is meant to serve all ASPA physicians. The majority of ASPA physicians are specialists and we are staffing the service with consultants who are very familiar with EHR implementations and best practices in specialist practices. Further, the selected EHR vendors have the capability and functionality to support a wide variety of specialists. Our expressed intent is to provide collaboration opportunities between practices to share development, configuration and design services in similar practices. The opportunity for this shared benefit is most pronounced in specialist practices as there are more similar clinical processes. We intend to deliver this benefit to all ASPA members, and specialists will benefit perhaps most of all. Many of the clinical integration benefits we pursue are related to the collaboration between primary care and specialists, particularly as it relates to referral and consultation efficiency and access to relevant clinical information. This will also serve the specialist community well. Finally, the REC services we provide to the primary care physicians will have spillover benefits to the specialists as part of our overall program activities.

Once I choose an EHR vendor, how long will it take me to get installed using your service?

There are many factors that affect this answer. Most physicians can complete a fairly extensive implementation in 4 to 8 months. However, this can potentially be shorter or longer based on your specific needs, your commitment to the process, and the availability of staff and size of your practice. Variables that affect this timeline include hardware decisions, practice management choices, level of design and engineering of clinical processes, level of desired integration to external services, clinical decision support adaptation, forms development, training approach, etc.

Will I have my own trainer on site to help me and my staff?

As part of the initial assessment, we will work with your practice to understand all of your requirements and needs. As part of this process we will assign a consultant to manage your specific implementation. Depending on your needs and level of training required, we may dedicate a trainer at the appropriate time. You should understand the overall approach to training and choose the approach that fits your practice best. You may choose to adopt a shared training approach or request a dedicated training resource. Ultimately it is your choice and your actual cost will depend on your selected approach.

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I understand that you help us make the software work for our practice. Who installs the software and how do you work with our EHR vendor?

To the greatest extent possible, we try to provide all of the services related to the EHR implementation, configuration and training. We prefer to take on as much control of the process as possible so that we can leverage the EHR Facilitation Service team skills and maximize the benefits available to you through our low-cost service model. Accordingly, we will provide all of the services possible and will attempt to focus the EHR vendor's role on the provision of software alone. This approach is the most effective for you. However, not all EHR vendors will allow this. The ASPA-approved vendors will. The other EHR vendors may allow us to take control or may not depending on their business model. However, in all cases, we will manage the vendor and the processes on your behalf. You will never need to actively manage the EHR vendor. This is our service to you as part of the overall EHR Facilitation Service.

Who supports the EHR and us after you install, train and leave?

As part of our service, we will fully document your EHR installation and configuration. We will make sure you have a complete set of required documentation at the end of the implementation and go-live process. The ASPA EHR Facilitation Service team will continue to be around, locally, long after you are in production. We are contemplating an additional service that will allow us to provide continuing support for as long as you maintain your EHR system. If you believe that our local knowledge and detailed knowledge of your practice and EHR system has value in a support role, we will contract for this at the time we solidify the support service. Alternatively, we will collaborate with you to hand off support to the vendor of your choice. This support service, when developed, will share support resources and costs across the ASPA community. We believe this approach will provide the best service levels to you and provide the most cost-effective choice.

Questions regarding EHR systems

Which EHR vendors have been selected by ASPA?

ASPA has selected the following vendors:

- ClearPractice www.clearpractice.com
- eClinicalWorks www.eclinicalworks.com
- Greenway Medical www.greenwaymedical.com
- InTUUN www.intuun.com
- Sage Healthcare www.sagehealth.com

My EHR vendor has assured me that I will be certified for Meaningful Use by implementing their EHR. Is this true?

This is absolutely incorrect. An EHR vendor must be certified to meet the requirements of Meaningful Use in order for you to, in turn, pursue your own Meaningful Use compliance. In order for you to meet the requirements, you must implement and configure the EHR system appropriately to collect the required clinical information in an

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appropriate fashion. Additionally, you need to assure that all users operate the EHR in the appropriate way and collect and share clinical data as required. More specifically, you need to adapt and modify your clinical processes to ensure that you use the EHR functions properly as well as collect and share the data required to meet Meaningful Use. Once that's done, you also need to successfully report required data as mandated. Most of these requirements and processes are your responsibility, not the EHR vendor's responsibility. A certified EHR vendor is a necessary first step, but it is only the first step.

Do I need to use one of the EHRs selected by ASPA?

No, you may select any certified EHR of your choice and we will support you in your EHR implementation. However, we suggest that you seriously consider the ASPA-approved EHRs. First and foremost, the preferred vendors have made financial, operational and technical commitments to ASPA that will, in turn, benefit all participating physicians. You will also be able to take maximum advantage of the InTUUN clinical integration services and, to the maximum extent possible, the ASPA-approved EHR's functions and services will be integrated directly with the ASPA Community Portal. In short, you will save the most money and have the best access to all of the benefits that the clinical integration and common services delivers. The ASPA-approved EHRs will give you the best overall benefit. Additionally, since we expect that a large number of your peers will select an ASPA-approved EHR, there will be ample opportunity to share services, learning, and resources in a large pool of users. To be very clear, we will support whatever decision you make. There are many good EHR vendors out there, and if another EHR vendor meets your needs the best, we will work with you to meet all of your requirements with your selected EHR vendor.

Do I know which EHR vendor representations I can believe?

Belief in an EHR vendor is really a function of how good their sales organization is at communicating their value. While we would never suggest that any vendor is untruthful, you must always look at motivation, and clearly, their motivation is to position themselves as the vendor of choice. ASPA-approved vendors have made the commitment to our process and the needs of our physicians. However, many other EHR vendors can do the same. We have no vested interest in any vendor. We can support you in your analysis to find the best fit vendor for you.

My EHR vendor wants me to sign their standard agreement. Is this wise?

As a small practice your hands are really tied. Your EHR vendor will not use an agreement you bring forward. They will move on to the next physician prospect. However, just because you use their agreement, it does not mean that you shouldn't seek to amend and change it to meet your critical needs. As a small practice, even this ability is limited. You should exert influence over a few key areas, and if the vendor will not agree, you may have the wrong vendor. If they fight now during the sales process, imagine how they will be in a contract dispute situation. The ASPA-approved vendors agree to preferential terms. By selecting an approved vendor, you can have some additional level of comfort and assurance. You still need to sign their agreement, but you have a better level of protection.

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What if I don't like the EHR even after really trying?

If you do the proper due diligence in the selection process and protect yourself contractually related to the acceptance process for the EHR, this should be a relatively low probability. However, if you do need to exit the agreement with the EHR vendor, the more work you do up front to protect yourself contractually and technically the better. Further, the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service team will assure that details about your configuration and your clinical data will be well-documented. Accordingly, if you do need to exit the agreement and move to another vendor, we will be able to give you the help you will require. If you rely on the old EHR vendor you could be facing an impossible proposition, either because the information is not available, or they will quote you a prohibitive fee to cooperate. There are many cases where old EHR vendors ask for an exorbitant amount for their cooperation, paid in advance.

Questions regarding the AzHeC Regional Extension Center

Who can access REC services?

REC services are only available to primary care providers (physicians, physician assistants or nurse practitioners with prescriptive privileges, practicing in family medicine, general/internal medicine, OB/GYN or pediatrics), in individual and small group practices (ten or few professionals with prescriptive privileges), who are primarily focused on primary care. Other specialists are not covered by REC services.

Why can't I just use the REC services? They are free.

The REC does in fact provide a service with value. However, by their own words, they are limited in what they can provide. Many of their services are designed to augment your own services and resources. Additionally, while some of the REC services are low-cost or free, there are provisions in your agreement to pay for the other services. Examples of costs and services you need to either complete yourself or pay for are: vendor training, configuration and customization of the EHR, template design, forms development, hardware implementation, extensive workflow design and/ or reengineering, and overall project management. We are currently working with the AzHeC Regional Extension Center and hope to be able to provide all of the REC services directly as a sub-delegated Technical Assistance Provider. When this is complete, we will be able to provide all of the benefits of the REC through our EHR Facilitation Service. If for whatever reason we are precluded from providing the REC services directly, we will still collaborate with the REC to help you take advantage of their services. Either way, you will get the benefit of their services plus all of the other remaining required services to effectively implement and train your team.

Do you do the same thing as the REC?

As represented in earlier questions, our service is more comprehensive than that of the REC. We will guide you through every aspect of EHR adoption. REC services are a subset of what we provide.

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If you are a REC partner, how do I know I am getting all of those funds?

As a REC Technical Assistance Provider, we will be required to account for the REC services and funding use in a formal reporting method. Additionally, all services we provide to you as part of this EHR Facilitation Service are reported to you. Accordingly, you will receive a complete accounting of all REC and non-REC related services. If it is a REC service, the funding comes from the REC and will be indicated as a no-cost item on your report. Further information is discussed in the funding questions below.

Questions regarding the cost of this service

What is it really going to cost me to use the ASPA EHR Facilitation Service?

The actual cost is directly dependent on the scope of the services you choose. Every practice is different. The first thing you should know is that we have engaged experienced EHR implementation resources at below-market rates. Accordingly, whatever services you choose will be more cost effective than securing them independently through your selected EHR vendor. Second, we are developing common programs and services related to project management, training and integration where the cost will be shared among all participants in the EHR Facilitation Service. This will also serve to reduce your overall cost. Finally, for services you select that are unique to your practice, we will collaborate with you and your peers to see if there are further opportunities to share these costs with peer practices.

Once you have signed up for the EHR Facilitation Service, we start the process. We work with you to assess your needs and requirements. We will assess your current clinical and technical environment, work with you to assess your needs and factor the selected EHR into the plan. Once we have a good understanding of the needs, we develop a work plan that documents the scope of services, the planned schedule and approach, and the costs. You will be given a complete opportunity to review, amend and ultimately approve the overall cost and approach. The total cost of the service is dependent on all of this work which can only be completed successfully based on the interactive involvement discussed above.

When do I pay and who do I pay?

All fees as part of this EHR Facilitation Service are paid to ASPA. All accounting and invoicing is provided by ASPA. In order to initiate the EHR Facilitation Service, we ask that you provide a \$2,500 payment at the time of signing the Member Participation Agreement. This payment is not an initiation fee. Of the \$2,500, we are applying \$500 as a refundable retainer to start the services. The \$500 retainer is held during the balance of your implementation and is returned, with interest, when your practice goes live with the EHR. The \$2,000 balance is a pre-payment against services. This pre-payment allows us to start the analysis process with your practice. The billable services you incur during the implementation process will come from the pre-payment first before additional funds are requested. You will receive a regular invoice for services throughout the implementation process and an accounting in support of the actual charges. If the REC is the source of any of the funding, you will receive an accounting that the REC funds were used to satisfy the invoice or any portion of the invoice. Any changes to the work plan during the course of the project, as approved in writing by you, will either increase or decrease the total expected costs.

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Aren't I wasting money if I have to pay my EHR vendor as well?

No, you are not wasting money under this service. None of our services are duplicative with the EHR vendor. We will strive to provide the majority of the EHR implementation services so you do not need to rely on the more costly EHR vendor professional services. The more services we provide, the less the EHR vendor provides. However, to the extent that the EHR vendor provides services, then we do not duplicate anything. In this case, our project management team manages the vendor's resources as opposed to our own project resources.

What if I am not satisfied?

We expect, of course, that you will be quite satisfied with the results of our EHR Facilitation Service. However, if there are issues related to your satisfaction, we will work diligently to resolve those issues. If you are still not satisfied, we can escalate your concerns to a Physician Steering Committee which will deal with potential disputes. Ultimately, we will work with you to resolve the issue.

What if I don't want to do what everyone else in ASPA is doing?

There are significant benefits of this EHR Facilitation Service. We believe that you will want to take advantage of all of the benefits and services. However, you are in no way obligated to be part of the clinical integration or even part of the other common and shared services we offer. The EHR Facilitation Service has three primary components: Common Services, Shared Services and Member-Specific Services. You are in no way obligated to participate in the common or shared services beyond the most straightforward pieces, including common resources for project management and training. You can chart your own path under the Member-Specific Services. While we hope you choose to take advantage of the many benefits common to others, you are not required to do so.

Questions regarding InTUUN and the ASPA Community Portal

I thought InTUUN was going to provide all of this?

InTUUN has several key roles at ASPA, including the ASPA Community Portal, the clinical integration vendor providing Health Information Exchange (HIE) services and a provider of an ASPA-approved, Meaningful Use-certified EHR. In fact, you may choose InTUUN to provide everything for you. However, we understand it is imperative that we give our physicians a choice. Not all providers will want the EHR provided by InTUUN. Not all providers will want to take advantage of the InTUUN HIE services. Many will. Different specialties with unique requirements and providers with differing preferences in general necessitate the need for choice. ASPA recognizes this, as does InTUUN. Accordingly, the ASPA Community Portal is exclusively provided by InTUUN and all providers can take advantage of the portal. However, HIE services can be provided by InTUUN, or not, at your discretion. The InTUUN EHR can be selected, as can any other certified EHR, at your choice and discretion. The preferred EHR systems we have chosen will allow you to readily integrate to the ASPA Community Portal and the InTUUN HIE services as you require. Other certified EHR choices will still be able to integrate but not at the same level of sophistication.

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Will other vendors really work with InTUUN given that they compete?

Yes. By definition, EHR vendors must, under Meaningful Use requirements, integrate and interoperate with other EHR systems and other health IT systems in the extended healthcare environment. Standards have been or will be developed to make sure this integration is viable. Practically speaking, there are limits to the sophistication and depth of integration that is possible in this environment as there are so many vendors and technologies. Many of these EHR and healthcare technology vendors have proprietary systems that make sophisticated integration challenging. This is where the ASPA-approved solutions come into play. These vendors have agreed to develop a more elegant and sophisticated integration, so long as their proprietary systems can be protected. We have engaged another firm, Ideal Health IT, to provide the majority of the EHR implementation and training services. Ideal Health IT is non-competitive to InTUUN and the other EHR vendors. By using Ideal Health IT as an impartial and un-biased intermediary, integration and interoperability is possible at a more sophisticated level.

What if I am not happy with the services provided by InTUUN?

The services provided by InTUUN are voluntary. As discussed above, we believe you will be pleased with the services provided. However, if there are issues, we will attempt to resolve them. Ultimately, if you are unhappy with InTUUN services, you are not compelled to use them. We will work with you, under the EHR Facilitation Services, to provide alternative choices for your practice.

Questions regarding Meaningful Use

How do I know I will get paid my Meaningful Use dollars?

Meaningful Use funding is the payoff for all of your hard work. There is no way to guarantee you will get the funds as so much of meeting the requirements are in your control. We work with you diligently to assure that your EHR choice, coupled with your implementation and configuration decisions, are consistent with the requirements of Meaningful Use. We will also make sure that we position you such that reporting of the measures as required are possible based on your implementation decisions. Ultimately, you are in control of becoming meaningful users of the EHR software. The best processes, practices and standards need to be complemented with effective and appropriate use by yourself and your staff. Further, you must sustain this approach to Meaningful Use as future requirements are introduced. In short, we can build the path, but it is your path to walk. If an EHR vendor tells you that by simply acquiring their EHR software you will meet the requirements of Meaningful Use, they are wrong.

How does Meaningful Use training work?

The training related to Meaningful Use actually starts on the very first day of the project. Training you and your clinical and operational users to become compliant with the requirements of Meaningful Use is integral to every step of the project. Accordingly, it is a combination of mentoring, reading, development, reporting and structured training. We will start discussing and preparing you for Meaningful Use in the assessment stage of the project and will reinforce the requirements throughout the project. Knowledge of the requirements will affect project decisions and these project decisions, in turn, will affect the training. However, later in the project and prior to go-live, we will formalize a training curriculum specific to your practice. The training, while specific to your practice, will leverage the common methods and learning of the overall EHR Facilitation Services program.