Staff at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has advised the AHA that the agency will allow hospitals participating in the electronic health record (EHR) meaningful use program for the first time in 2015 to attest between now and August 14. This is a reversal of the agency’s previously stated intention to require these hospitals to wait until January 1, 2016 to attest due to system changes being made by the agency. The AHA is pleased with this change in policy and advocated for it, as the previous policy was unfair to hospitals new to the program.

Eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) participating in meaningful use for the first time this year may attest to a 90-day reporting period for fiscal year 2015, and a number of hospitals have indicated to the AHA and CMS that they are ready to do so. Under a temporary solution that will be implemented on a case-by-case basis, CMS will accommodate these hospitals as follows:

1. The hospital must first register in the CMS Registration and Attestation System at: https://ehrincentives.cms.gov/hitech/login.action.

2. Once the registration is active, the hospital should contact Elizabeth Holland in the Division of Health Information Technology at CMS (elizabeth.holland@cms.hhs.gov) and provide the hospital name, CMS Certification Number and contact person information.

3. CMS will then assign an individual to work with the hospital to complete its attestation.

Note that hospitals using this option must attest to the Stage 1 meaningful use requirements that were applicable beginning in 2014. They will not be able to attest to
the revised requirements contained in the recent proposed rule on modifications to meaningful use for 2015 to 2017. Furthermore, hospitals using this option will not be able to attest again until January 2017 for a full-year EHR reporting period in 2016.

This option is available only to hospitals new to the program in 2015. Eligible hospitals and CAHs that previously participated in the program must report on a full year of performance and will not be able to submit their attestations through the CMS Registration and Attestation System until the regular attestation is available in early 2016.

For more information on the proposed rule modifying meaningful use in 2015 to 2017, please see the AHA’s advisory and comment letter.