CAFP EHR Readiness Assessment Tool

The CAFP EHR Readiness Assessment Tool was designed to help practices move toward the adoption of an electronic health record (EHR), and thereby improve quality of care and gain workflow efficiencies. This tool will help you identify where you need to enhance your capacity to successfully undertake and sustain EHR adoption. The assessment will focus on five areas:

1. Management Capacity
2. Finance and Budget Capacity
3. Operational Capacity
4. Technology Capacity
5. Organizational Alignment

The tool is designed for use by solo and small-to-medium-size practices. It will evaluate your practice's readiness for EHR, so it is very important to take all five categories into consideration to ensure that you select and develop processes that are appropriate to your practice.

Instructions for completing the assessment: The assessment should be completed by the physician lead/champion and each question should be answered from the perspective of the practice. Each section is divided into levels showing various stages of readiness, represented by points that range from 0-5 (higher point values indicate a higher level of readiness). Add the points in each section and read the scoring interpretation at the end of each section for feedback. An overall score is made available at the bottom and can be interpreted once you add all sections.

Identify the best description of your practice's current status and write the point value that matches that level under the "score" column. You may discover that your practice may not fully match any of the descriptions; just identify one that most closely resembles your practice. Your honesty is essential and it is better to underestimate than overestimate. With a portrait of your practice's readiness, you will be better prepared to design a plan and look for additional resources that meet your specific needs.

At the end of each section, a "tip" offers advice on how to advance your practice's readiness for an EHR. If your score is in the low range, pay particular attention to the advice and resources identified there.

Section 1 – Management Capacity for EHR

Readiness Area	Readiness Component	Not Yet Prepared 0 - 1	Moderately Prepared 2 - 3	Highly Prepared 4 - 5	Score
Clinical and Administrative Staff	A physician "champion" willing to guide the implementation of an EHR in the practice…	has not been identified.	has been identified, but his or her role in the implementation plan is unclear.	has been identified and has a clearly delineated role in the implementation plan.	
	Staffing needs for EHR implementation and use…	have not been analyzed.	are generally understood, but a staffing plan has not been developed.	have been documented and analyzed. Current staffing and proposed staffing needs have been included in the planning process.	
	Staff dedicated to project management and quality improvement for EHR…	have not been specifically identified.	have a basic understanding of EHR functionality and are participating in the decision-making process.	are experienced and educated about EHR functionality and workflow effects. They are authorized to lead the decision-making process.	

	Roles and responsibilities for analyzing product options, contract terms, and negotiating with the EHR vendor…	have not been established or assigned.	have been developed; requirements are generally understood and prioritized.	have been assigned and are clear; requirements and expectations have been captured.	
TOTAL Management Capacity Score					

Management Capacity Scoring Interpretation

- Score = 14 - 20
  - A score in this range may indicate that managerial and operational capacity is strong. The likelihood for success is high if management methodologies and staff resources are used strategically.
- Score = 7 - 14
  - A score in this range may indicate that there is adequate capacity in some areas, but not consistently throughout management, operations, and protocol.
- Score = 0 - 6
  - A score in this range may indicate that there is weak capacity throughout management. Consider further management discussions about areas of weakness.

Tip: For more information on management capacity, we recommend that you explore the Project Management and Oversight page and the Organizational Change Management and Training page of the AHRQ HIT Toolkit. You should also subscribe to a health care HIT news feed like Healthcare IT News.

In terms of preparing for vendor contracting, read the Vendor Selection and Contracting Tip Sheet and begin to look into vendor evaluation and ranking websites like EMR Consultants, ACG Group, and KLAS to assist you in your vendor research. Many of these resources, including those mentioned, are free.

Section 2 – Finance and Budget Capacity for EHR

Readiness Area	Readiness Component	Not Yet Prepared 0 - 1	Moderately Prepared 2 - 3	Highly Prepared 4 - 5	Score
EHR Cost Analysis	EHR costs and benefits…	have not been clearly defined.	are partially developed. Purchase and training costs are known but measurable benefits have not been defined.	have been evaluated in a cost/benefit analysis.	
	Return-on-investment analysis…	are not intended to be specifically tracked.	will be tracked post-implementation.	have been estimated and accounted for.	
	Funds for ongoing adoption of required standards and upgrades…	are not incorporated into future planning.	will be considered post-implementation.	will be part of the general budget.	
	Acceptable productivity loss and temporary reductions in revenue…	have not been evaluated.	are estimated but not accounted for in the budget.	have been estimated and accounted for.	
TOTAL Finance and Budget Capacity Score					

Finance and Budget Capacity Scoring Interpretation

- Score = 14 - 20
    - A score in this range may indicate that your practice has a clear understanding of the cost analysis of EHR implementation.
- Score = 7 - 13

4

- o A score in this range may indicate that your practice has a good understanding of the cost analysis of EHR implementation and developing strategies to continue funding for HIT technology.
  - Score = 0 - 6
    - o A score in this range may indicate that your practice has not performed an adequate cost-benefit analysis of purchasing an EHR. Consider further assessment and looking into consultative services for additional assistance.

Tip: Your practice is responsible for all vendor contracts. We recommend you read the California Health Care Foundation-produced buyer's guide for an overview. It is also important to know and understand EHR contract and pricing as you budget for the new technology. Additional information related to budget and finance preparation can be found in Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) website.

Section 3 – Operational Capacity for EHR

Readiness Area	Readiness Component	Not Yet Prepared 0 -1	Moderately Prepared 2 -3	Highly Prepared 4- 5	Score
Training	A formal training plan…	is not part of the planning process; staff will receive training from the vendor and on the job.	is part of the planning process. EHR implementation and skill-set-gap training will be provided to physicians and staff.	is part of the planning process. EHR implementation, workflow redesign and skill-set gaps will be provided for physicians and staff.	
	Additional training for staff (and IT staff) involved in EHR adoption…	has not been planned.	will be identified as necessary by management.	has been identified to ensure staff possess appropriate skill sets.	

5

Workflow Process	Current and proposed EHR-related administrative and clinical processes…	are not developed.	are generally understood and incorporated into product evaluation, but workflow redesign has not been documented.	are documented in a process map and included in product evaluation process; planning process is in place for workflow redesign.	
	Policies, procedures and protocols necessary for EHR implementation …	have been considered but not analyzed.	have been analyzed with a plan for development.	have been analyzed and developed, and are ready to be introduced to the team.	
TOTAL Operational Capacity Score					

Operational Capacity Scoring Interpretation

- Score = 14 - 20
  - A score in this range may indicate that your practice's operations and staff resources are strong.
- Score = 7 - 13
  - A score in this range may indicate that there is adequate staff capacity for EHR adoption. Continue to address workflow issues using tools and resources like a process mapping tool before moving forward with EHR implementation.
- Score = 0 - 6
  - A score in this range may indicate that there are capacity issues critical to successful EHR adoption. Consider developing a comprehensive analysis to improve capacity and address workflow changes before moving forward.

Tip: TransforMED has a practice-based team care resource center designed to help your team work effectively and improve communication. CAFP has a Practice Management News article that talks about migrating workflows from paper to an EHR available here. If you would like to read about a small practice's journey from migrating from paper to fully electronic files, please click here. Additionally, AHRQ has a workflow analysis sheet.

6

Section 4 – Technology Capacity for EHR

Readiness Area	Readiness Component	Not Yet Prepared 0 - 1	Moderately Prepared 2 - 3	Highly Prepared 4 - 5	Score
Information Management	The practice management system…	has not been optimized or utilized for patient management.	has been utilized, including some features that facilitate patient management.	has been optimized with modules that support patient management.	
	EHR-generated reports for patient-population management, population, and quality improvement…	have not been defined or documented.	have been partially defined but not documented.	have been defined and documented; requirements have been included in the product evaluation process.	
Patient Involvement	Patient interaction with EHR…	has not been evaluated.	has been considered, but no requirements have been documented.	is determined with patient input and requirements have been included in the planning process.	
	Policies and procedures for corrections or amendments to patient records and release of information…	have not been evaluated.	have been discussed but not documented; a plan is in place to develop policies and procedures.	have been analyzed and discussed; a plan is in place to develop communications for patients and external organizations.	

	EHR-enabled referral processes, e-prescribing, and other HIT applications…	have not been evaluated.	have been discussed but no specific plan exists.	have been designed and included in the planning process.	
IT Management and Support	IT management…	is nonexistent or has limited experience with system integration or data conversion, relying heavily on external resources for IT planning and decision-making.	has experience with system integration or data conversion but tends to rely on the vendor for detailed tasks and activities.	has strong experience with system integration, data conversion, and managing expert resources to fill internal skill or knowledge gaps.	
	IT staff…	is nonexistent or limited staff are determining IT infrastructure requirements.	are involved in the decision-making process to determine IT infrastructure requirements.	have been educated about EHR objectives in order to actively engage in the EHR decision-making process and determine necessary IT infrastructure requirements.	

IT Infrastructure	A needs assessment of hardware, desktop terminals, and other devices necessary to support EHR use…	is generally understood but has not been evaluated.	has been performed but not documented in the planning process.	has been performed and requirements included in the planning process.	
	A plan for a technical infrastructure using a high-availability platform, upgraded to be standardized, scalable, and easily maintained…	is not in place; infrastructure will be upgraded according to projected needs as standards-compliant as possible as new systems are purchased.	is being developed and will be standards-compliant with HL7 being considered.	is in place and will be standards-compliant with HIPAA, HL7, and other clinical and administrative transaction standards.	
TOTAL Technology Capacity Score					

Technology Capacity Scoring Interpretation

- Score = 32 - 45
    - A score in this range may indicate that IT capacity is strong and the likelihood for achieving successful EHR adoption is high.
- Score = 14 - 27
    - A score in this range may indicate that IT capacity is adequate in some areas but may need additional support analysis or investment in IT infrastructure. Identify areas of weakness and develop a plan to increase and improve IT capacity.
- Score = 0 - 13
    - A score in this range may indicate that IT capacity needs work. Identify your areas of weakness and consider investing time and resources to looking into your practice's specific technology needs.

Tip: AHRQ developed resources that can help your practice conduct a technology infrastructure assessment. Once you assess your technology needs, take advantage of the Vendor Selection and Contracting Tool. The Center for HIT at the American Academy of Family Physicians can also assist you in selecting the right EHR. The center has information about on-site visits and office demonstrations provided by EHR vendors. Also, it is important to have a clear idea of the specific functions and features of an EHR; use the following questionnaire made by the American Medical Association before signing an EHR agreement.

Section 5 – Organizational Alignment for EHR

Readiness Area	Readiness Component	Not Yet Prepared 0 - 1	Moderately Prepared 2 - 3	Highly Prepared 4 - 5	Score
Culture	EHR is viewed…	as an IT project to "go paperless" only.	as clinical technology to achieve workflow efficiencies.	as technology to improve quality care, delivery, and access.	
	The EHR planning process includes…	a single physician or solo investigator only.	key planners or select providers.	all members of the practice and emphasizes team collaboration.	
	Physician involvement in the EHR process…	is limited to a physician advocate to represent clinical interests.	primarily occurs for key decisions; clinical interests are valued.	is active in both planning and decision-making; clinical and managerial interests are aligned.	

	Framework for outlining EHR priorities…	has not been thoroughly discussed.	has been discussed but not documented prior to initiating vendor evaluation.	has been documented before initiating vendor evaluation and is being used to facilitate the decision-making process.	
Leadership	Leadership…	believes EHR is necessary, but is divided as to how to communicate why and when to pursue.	has studied the pros and cons of implementing an EHR and can make an argument for why benefits outweigh costs.	understands the benefits of an EHR and sets a clear and consistent vision for how it can support efficiency and quality-improvement goals.	
	EHR champions…	rely on the vendor to provide EHR planning guidance.	initiate EHR delegates or other team members to plan.	devote substantial time to planning for EHR adaptation and implementation with quality issues in mind.	
Strategy	IT strategic planning…	has not been considered as part of the strategic planning process.	has been carved out as a separate part of the practice's strategic planning process.	has been an integral part of the practice's strategic planning process, resulting in a clearly-defined plan that guides EHR procurement.	

	Quality and efficiency issues…	have been discussed, but without clear objectives of the practice or connection with EHR technology.	are objectives, but are not clearly defined in a measurable way or connected with EHR technology.	are documented as key objectives in the strategic plan with measurable objectives and corresponding timeline. Quality issues are clearly connected with EHR technology.	
TOTAL Organizational Alignment Score					

Organizational Alignment Scoring Interpretation

- Score = 28 - 40
  - o A score in this range indicates there is a strong enough understanding of the value of EHR or how it will impact your practice's clinic goals. The environment for achieving success is in place.
- Score = 12 - 29
  - o A score in this range indicates that there is an understanding of the value of EHR, but a detailed exploration of how it can enable your practice's ability to achieve its strategic goals will have to be clarified.
- Score = 0 - 11
  - o A score in this range may indicate there is not a strong enough understanding of the value of EHR or how it will impact your practice's clinic goals.

Tip: There is a growing body of evidence that supports the belief that an EHR can improve the quality of health care, but implementing the technology is a large feat. Building buy-in for change at all levels (physicians, staff, and even patients) requires a lot of work. These resources provided by AHRQ are a good place to start bringing about consensus for change. For additional reading on analyzing the type of leader/physician champion you are and how to successfully navigate your EHR implementation, click here.

Scoring Interpretation

TOTAL Overall Score	

- Overall Score = 97 - 140
    - A score in this range may indicate that your practice understands the value of implementing an EHR. Management and team have worked to prepare much of the pre-work and are ready for any challenges during the adoption process.
- Overall Score = 44 - 96
    - A score in this range may indicate that your practice is strong in some areas and weak in others. It is important to identify the areas of improvement that need additional attention.
- Overall Score = 0 - 43
    - A score in this range may indicate that your practice is not yet prepared to move forward with EHR adoption. Develop a comprehensive plan and organize management and staff to create collective buy-in. Determine why your practice is interested in EHR adoption and discuss ways in which you can build capacity to ensure successful implementation and use.

The practice assessment is one of the first steps in the learning process of EHR adoption. We hope this tool can be used to educate you on EHR implementation and identify areas of assistance that can help your practice move forward in the learning process. Successful EHR adoption requires teamwork, collaboration, and readiness. With that said, we ask that you explore the HIT Toolkit for a library of resources that can further assist you in any of the five areas in the assessment.