Health Law Daily Wrap Up, AGENCY NEWS—HHS provides funding for training small practices in Quality Payment Program, (Jun. 21, 2016)

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By Kayla R. Bryant, J.D.

HHS will provide $20 million in funding that will be used to train Medicare clinicians in small practices on the Quality Payment Program. These funds will be primarily directed toward clinicians practicing in underserved areas, including rural areas and health professional shortage areas. This amount of funding will be provided annually for the next five years.

Quality Payment Program. The proposed Quality Payment Program would implement the changes created by Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), which reformed clinician payment for serving Medicare patients. The proposal streamlined various value and quality programs into two paths. Under the program, physicians would be able to choose from the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) and the Advanced Alternative Payment Models (APMs) (see Physician reporting streamlined, less burdensome under flexible Quality Payment Program, April 28, 2016).

Under MIPS, physicians would submit information about four performance categories. Then, a composite performance score is generated and compared against a threshold. This threshold determines the payment adjustment. Under APMs, physicians would receive a lump sum payment that could grow annually.

Small practices. Secretary Burwell emphasized the administration’s commitment to providing resources to small and rural practices that will allow them to provide quality care. Organizations must show that they are able to provide training to individual clinicians or small group practices of no more than 15 clinicians to become eligible for funding. The training would include creating a strategy for Quality Payment Program participation, such as adding electronic health record (EHR) capability, joining an APM, and evaluating practice workflow.