



PROGRAM ASSISTANCE LETTER

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DOCUMENT TITLE: Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike Program Implementation of Electronic Information Systems

TO: Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes
Health Center Program Grantees
Primary Care Associations
Primary Care Organizations
National Cooperative Agreements

I. Background

In order to better support the management of the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Look-Alike Program, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is streamlining and simplifying its application and data reporting processes by integrating FQHC Look-Alike applications into its electronic systems. This will produce numerous benefits for FQHC Look-Alikes and applicants, including improved processes for applying for FQHC Look-Alike designation, recertification, and renewal of designations, facilitating changes in scope of project requests, and more efficient communication. For HRSA, these enhancements will bring together data and information used to monitor FQHC Look-Alikes, record program changes, and track program performance into one centralized system. This system will assist and simplify communication between FQHC Look-Alikes and FQHC Look-Alike Project Officers who review applications for compliance with program requirements. In addition, application processes that are currently based on paper submissions will be replaced with more efficient electronic submission through the HRSA Electronic Handbook (EHB) portal. With the implementation of electronic information systems through EHB, FQHC Look-Alikes, applicants, and HRSA staff will have ready access to reliable information needed for effective decision-making and program implementation. The transition to a single information management system through HRSA's EHB will be phased in and is targeted to be fully operational for organizations applying and reapplying for designation in fiscal year 2011.

II. HRSA's Communication Strategy, Training & Technical Assistance Resources

HRSA is aware that this transition to an electronic process will require changes in the way that FQHC Look-Alikes collect and report data. Therefore, in advance of implementing each

major step requiring active FQHC Look-Alike involvement (highlighted in Section III below), HRSA is committed to:

- disseminating detailed communication notifying FQHC Look-Alikes of the scheduled incorporation of the new module to the electronic system;
- performing in-depth testing of each module incorporated into the system involving both FQHC Look-Alikes and FQHC Look-Alike Project Officers; and
- providing technical assistance at each stage including:
 - conducting demonstrations to FQHC Look-Alikes;
 - holding conference calls to describe new or changed processes; and
 - providing different venues to respond to FQHC Look-Alike questions, including a help desk, which can be reached at 301-443-7356 from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM EDT Monday through Friday, and an e-mail box, which can be contacted at BHCMISYS@hrsa.gov.

The intent of HRSA's communication strategy is to assure that FQHC Look-Alikes are notified in advance of any change and to provide direction in accessing training and technical assistance resources designed to assist FQHC Look-Alikes in the transition to the EHB portal.

III. Implementation of Electronic Handbook Activities

The items that follow below are the major activities to be undertaken in the implementation of enhancements to HRSA's EHB. As stated previously, HRSA is committed to providing FQHC Look-Alikes with detailed information for each activity prior to and during implementation.

1. **Baseline Scope Verification (BSV)**

Accurate, reliable, and timely information on each FQHC Look-Alike's scope of project will help HRSA staff provide better customer service, facilitate timely decision-making on submissions such as change in scope of project (CIS), and assure that accurate information is readily available. All FQHC Look-Alikes will be required to participate in a scope verification process in July/August 2010. The purpose of the process is to transfer data on the most recently approved scope of project from a "paper" application to EHB. Each FQHC Look-Alike will be required to register in EHB and verify data on the scope of their project, specifically, information on approved services, sites and other activities/locations. FQHC Look-Alikes will be given the opportunity to review and verify site data pre-populated from HRSA's current databases and will be required to enter data on services and other activities that are part of their current approved scope of project. This data will establish an electronic baseline scope of project for each FQHC Look-Alike, which will be available for all future applications and actions. In preparation for BSV, HRSA will be contacting FQHC Look-Alikes in the near future to verify basic information about each organization and its authorizing official necessary to begin the data transfer process. It is imperative to the success of BSV that FQHC Look-Alikes provide all requested information in the specified timeframes.

2. Change in Scope (CIS)

Starting August 2010, FQHC Look-Alikes will be required to submit CIS requests (prior approval and general self updates that do not require prior approvals) through a new electronic process using HRSA's EHB. This new electronic submission process will replace the former requirement of submitting hardcopy paper CIS requests. The process for requesting a CIS is described in Policy Information Notice (PIN) 2009-06, "Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike Guidelines and Application," and PIN 2008-01, "Defining Scope of Project and Policy for Requesting Changes."

3. FQHC Look-Alike Program Applications

PIN 2009-06, "Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike Guidelines and Application," provides the revised guidelines and application package for the FQHC Look-Alike program. This document supersedes PIN 2003-21, "Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike Guidelines and Application." PIN 2009-06 provides guidelines for organizations seeking FQHC Look-Alike designation and conveys program requirements for maintaining designation through an annual recertification and renewal of designation application. Following initial designation, FQHC Look-Alikes must now submit a renewal of designation application every five years (or as determined by HRSA) to maintain the FQHC Look-Alike designation in addition to the established annual recertification application. The renewal of designation application is similar to the initial designation application. Refer to PIN 2009-06, Section III.1., Application Submission Requirements, for additional information on these types of applications.

Starting October 2010, FQHC Look-Alikes will be required to submit recertification applications electronically utilizing the EHB, including any HRSA program specific forms, such as Forms 5A - Services, 5B- Service Sites and 5C- Other Activities. Starting December 2010, FQHC Look-Alikes, which are submitting renewal of designation applications, will be required to submit applications electronically utilizing the EHB. Starting March 2011, organizations applying for initial FQHC Look-Alike designation will be required to submit their applications electronically utilizing HRSA's EHB.

For each type of application, FQHC Look-Alikes and applicants will submit requested application data using structured forms that will be completed electronically and unstructured forms that will be uploaded. The data collected in the scope verification process will pre-populate forms for recertification and renewal of designation applications; thereby, saving time and effort in preparing applications. Unstructured data will be attached electronically to provide the remaining required information for each application. Ultimately, FQHC Look-Alikes will not only save time and effort in the preparation and submission of applications, but they will also be able to track the status of their applications through the review process.

HRSA is committed to assuring a smooth and successful transition of the FQHC Look-Alike program to the electronic processes in the EHBs. To this end, we are preparing numerous technical assistance resources to assist FQHC Look-Alikes. We are confident that these

processes will streamline, simplify, and reduce the application submission burden. We look forward to working with you on this transition. If you have technical questions about EHB, please contact the BPHC Help Line at 301-443-7356 from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM EDT Monday through Friday. If you have programmatic questions, please contact Twyla Adams or Esther Paul at (301) 594-4300 or submit any questions to the OPPD e-mail box OPPDGeneral@hrsa.gov.

Sincerely,

James Macrae
Associate Administrator