

OCHIN brings health care IT to cash-strapped clinics

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Portland-based Oregon Community Health Information Network is working to change the health care information system, one clinic at a time.

The organization provides information technology services to public health departments and private clinics that primarily serve Medicaid and Medicare patients and the uninsured.

"We're in the middle of a complete revolution on the IT side of health care, and we are right in the middle of that work," said OCHIN CEO and President Abigail Sears. OCHIN's customers are clinics that do not otherwise have the resources to obtain the technology infrastructure that they need.

Under Sears, OCHIN is steadily growing. Its revenue has climbed between 20 percent and 25 percent each of the last five years and hit \$22 million in 2011.

Sears believes it will keep growing by at least 10 percent over the next few years.

Reflecting that growth, a year ago OCHIN signed Portland's largest office space lease of 2011, for 38,300 square feet at 1881 S.W. Naito Parkway.

OCHIN's roomy new space will allow the organization to expand from 140 workers a year ago to about 200.

"We're in a fast-growing industry and the jobs we create pay well," or at least more than the state's \$36,816 average yearly wage, Sears said when the lease



Sears

was announced. "We'll continue to grow. The use of clinical data is really important, and we invest a lot of money in our staff."

Member clinics, now spread across 14 states, pay a discounted fee for access to OCHIN's practice manage-

ment and electronic health record systems. "What they get is a really high-quality service they couldn't afford to buy on their own," Sears said.

Sears came to Portland after completing a master's of health care administration and an MBA at the University of Minnesota. In 2000, after working at the Portland VA Medical Center for two years, she was offered a position administering a grant for Care Oregon. "That grant was the spark for the organization that is now

OCHIN," Sears said, which was spun off from Care Oregon as a separate 501(c) 3 nonprofit in 2003.

Sears was OCHIN's first employee. She was promoted to chief operating officer and chief strategic director in 2003. She helped hire the first CEO, Mike Leahy, who held the post until his retirement in 2007, when Sears took over.

**Abigail
Sears**
CEO of the Year
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