



Digital Health Incentives Scheme

For Prelims: National Health Authority, [Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission](#), Digital Health Incentives Scheme, Unified Health Interface, [Blockchain technology](#), [Telemedicine](#)

For Mains: Features of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, Major Challenges Related to Digital Healthcare in India

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Why in News?

[National Health Authority \(NHA\)](#) has announced an extension of its **Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS)** under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.

- The DHIS, offering incentives of up to Rs. 4 crores, has been extended till **December 31, 2023**.

What is the Digital Health Incentives Scheme?

- **About:**
 - Under the **Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS)**, hospitals, diagnostic labs, and digital health solution providers are **incentivized to embrace transformative digitization practices**.
 - The scheme operates with the goal of fostering a digitally inclusive healthcare ecosystem that aligns with the larger vision of **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission**.
- **Eligibility:**
 - Health facilities (hospitals, diagnostic labs) and registered Digital Solution Companies (DSCs) under **ABDM's Health Facility Registry (HFR)** are eligible to participate in the scheme.
- **Incentive Calculation:**
 - The financial incentives are based on the number of digital health records created and linked to **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) numbers of patients**.
- **Achievements:**
 - **Incentive Recipients:** As of June 2023, a total of **1205 health facilities have registered under the DHIS**, including 567 public and 638 private hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic labs.
 - **Digital Solution Companies:** Among the 25 registered digital solution companies, **22 are from the private sector**, demonstrating diverse participation.

What is Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission?

- **About:**
 - The [Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission \(ABDM\)](#) is a national initiative that aims to **develop the digital health infrastructure** of the country. It was launched in **September, 2021**.

- **Ayushman Bharat** is a flagship scheme of India which was launched **as recommended by the [National Health Policy 2017](#)**, to achieve the vision of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**.

- **Objective:**

- It aims to provide **digital health IDs for all Indian citizens** to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.
- The **National Health Authority (NHA)** under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the implementing Agency.

- **Unified Health Interface (UHI):**

- Under ABDM, UHI is envisioned as an open protocol for various digital health services. UHI Network is an open network of **End User Applications (EUAs)** and participating Health Service Provider (HSP) applications.
- UHI enables a wide variety of digital health services between patients and health service providers (HSPs) including **appointment booking, teleconsultation, service discovery and others**.

- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Sandbox:**

- The Sandbox, established under the mission, serves as a platform for testing technology and products.
- It aids organizations, including private entities, in becoming **Health Information Providers or Users**.

What are the Major Challenges Related to Digital Healthcare in India?

- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Despite advancements, **a significant portion of India still lacks reliable [internet connectivity](#)** and necessary digital infrastructure.
 - This hampers the ability to access and deliver digital healthcare services in remote and rural areas.
- **Digital Literacy:** Many people, especially in rural areas and older populations, may **not be familiar with technology or lack the necessary digital literacy** skills to effectively use digital healthcare platforms and services.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** Maintaining patient data privacy and security is a significant concern in **digital healthcare**. Ensuring that sensitive medical information remains confidential and protected from unauthorized access is crucial.
- **Telemedicine Regulations:** While telemedicine has gained popularity, **regulatory clarity regarding the practice, prescription of medications**, and teleconsultation across state lines has been a challenge.

Way Forward

- **Blockchain for Health Records:** Implement **[blockchain technology](#)** to **securely store and manage electronic health records**. Patients could control access to their data while **ensuring data integrity and interoperability among healthcare providers**.
- **Data Analytics for Public Health:** Leverage **big data analytics to predict disease outbreaks, plan resource allocation**, and devise targeted interventions to manage public health challenges more effectively.
- **Online Training and Skill Development:** Train healthcare professionals in using digital tools effectively. Offer online courses for medical professionals to upskill in areas like **[telemedicine](#), data analytics, and AI applications in healthcare**.
- **Digital Health Policies and Regulations:** Establish comprehensive regulations and guidelines for digital health technologies, **ensuring patient privacy, data security, and ethical use of digital services and other technologies**.

