PHIN Newsletter

Director's Corner

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Much has changed over the last year – a new Informatics organization, a number of new national health IT initiatives, as well as reduced budgets and resources across public health. We are at a critical juncture, a critical point in time where we must reexamine our priorities, do more with less, and gain efficiencies across the public health enterprise. Additionally, it has become challenging to keep up with the array of national efforts and their related activities. These efforts create both opportunities and challenges for public health. The Public Health Informatics and Technology Program Office has taken a new look at the Public Health Information Network (PHIN) and has worked with our partners to develop a strategic plan that addresses alignment with national efforts such as the Standards and Interoperability Framework, participation in standards activities, identifying best practices, and developing services and tools to meet the needs of public health at all levels. We are also working to provide appropriate venues to generate discussions and engage in dialogue to help us understand the issues and challenges. The PHIN Newsletter will highlight success stories and upcoming events such as the Public Health Informatics Conference, and will provide information on a few helpful resources and programs currently available at CDC.

We look forward to seeing you at the Public Health Informatics (PHI) Conference in August.

PHI Conference

The annual PHIN conference has evolved to become the Public Health Informatics (PHI) conference in 2011. This year's conference will feature many opportunities for networking among public health and health informatics professionals from the tribal, local, state, national, and international levels with workshops, specialized tutorials, and other events to facilitate shared learning and planning to build informatics capacity to advance public health. The conference will be held in downtown Atlanta, Georgia at the Hyatt Regency from August 21 through August 24, 2011. Registration details and more information may be found at the following website: www.cdc.gov/phiconference.

PHIN Partner Call

The PHIN community meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 3:00-4:00 PM ET for the PHIN Partner Call. These meetings facilitate communication and information sharing within the PHIN community to further the adoption of national standards. Previous topics have included the "Meaningful Use (MU) Incident Command Center at CDC," the "PHIN Strategic Plan," and "Electronic Health Record (EHR) MU Message Transports." To view past call information, please click on the link, PHIN Partner Calls 2011, and to volunteer or share information on public health informatics with our partners, please email us, phintech@cdc.gov.

Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services
Public Health Informatics and Technology Program Office

PHIN Strategic Plan

In September 2010, CDC began developing a new strategic plan for PHIN to improve public health through efficient, effective, and interoperable public health information systems. The *PHIN Strategic Plan* was opened for public comment during April of this year and received valuable feedback from internal CDC programs and external stakeholders. PHIN leadership continues to incorporate suggestions and finalize the PHIN Strategic Plan.

Did You Know?

PHIN recognizes the vast potential of Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) in securely and reliably exchanging information between the clinical community and public health. Marc Kolman pointed out the need to involve consumers when using electronic systems to exchange, collect, share, and store personal health information through HIEs in a keynote presentation at the Health Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) conference in February 2011, titled, "Engaging the Public in Health Information Technology and Health Information Exchange." Marc Kolman, MSPH, is a consultant in Carrboro, North Carolina.

How PHIN supports Electronic Health Records Meaningful Use (EHR MU)

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act supports the concept of EHR MU, an effort led by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology. HITECH proposes the "meaningful use" of interoperable EHRs throughout the U.S. health care delivery system and seeks to ensure that health information can be exchanged to improve quality of care. As part of this effort, CDC is assisting public health agencies in developing the capacity to accept data from EHRs for immunization information systems, syndromic surveillance systems from providers and hospitals, and reportable laboratory results from hospitals only. To this end, CDC is leveraging the shared policies, standards, practices, and services that have already been developed as part of PHIN to support EHR MU. For example:

- The Syndromic Surveillance Messaging Guide (*pending publication*) shows how required data elements map into the appropriate message specification fields using PHIN standard vocabularies,
- PHIN Messaging Quality Framework (MQF) is an automated testing tool that determines if HL7 messages are compliant with MU Message Implementation Guides for reportable laboratory results and immunization registries,
- PHIN Vocabulary Access and Distribution System (PHIN VADS) provides a common terminology reference tool for accessing, searching, and distributing HL7 messaging value sets,
- Reportable Conditions Mapping Table (RCMT) provides all the laboratory tests (Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes (LOINC)) and results ((Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine--Clinical Terms (SNOMED)) associated with jurisdiction reportable and nationally notifiable conditions, and
- The PHIN Messaging System (PHIN MS) securely sends and receives encrypted data over the Internet to public health information systems using Electronic Business Extensible Markup Language (ebXML) technology.

Through these efforts, as of July 2011, 21 public health agencies are ready to test for receipt of electronic laboratory reporting, 6 for the receipt of immunization information system data, and 3 for the receipt of syndromic surveillance data. With the assistance of PHIN, public health agencies continue to meet the challenges of EHR MU. For more information on Meaningful Use, please visit: www.cdc.gov/ehrmeaningfuluse.

Bridging Direct with PHIN MS: Minnesota Department of Health's Technical Solution for Public Health Data Transport

One of the Stage 1 EHR MU objectives is the capability of public health agencies to electronically receive data for immunization information systems from hospitals and providers. Most public health agencies currently use PHIN MS as a secure message transport mechanism to receive these and other types of messages from their partners. Even though the EHR MU effort does not specify a requirement for message transport, ONC is facilitating the use of Direct as a transport mechanism through a series of pilot projects. As part of the Minnesota Direct Pilot Project, the Minnesota Department of Health worked with their Health Information Service Provider (HISP) to build a bridge from Direct to PHIN MS. Specifically, messages containing immunization data were sent via Direct from Hennepin County Medical Center and received at the Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC) Registry via PHIN MS. Building upon capabilities developed through PHIN, MN developed a public health data transport solution to facilitate public health data exchange that may be replicated in other jurisdictions.

For more information, see the HHS News Release, the March 29, 2011 ONC Direct Project Update, and the slides given at session 10 of the April 13, 2011 ONC Direct Boot Camp.