

Draft Strategic Plan for PA Health Information Exchange

The Governor's Office of Health Care Reform announced on Nov. 30 that it has issued a draft strategic plan for the Pennsylvania Health Information Exchange, or PHIX, for a 30-day public comment period. The plan outlines how to best transition to an electronic system of health records to improve efficiency, cut costs and provide better quality care.

"Health care providers across the nation lag far behind almost every other kind of business in using electronic data to better manage what they do," said GOHCR Director Ann S. Torregrossa. "The creation of a health information exchange will mark a huge step in transforming Pennsylvania's health care industry from one using paper records to one using electronic data, which, ultimately, reduces the costs of health care."

PHIX will be the "superhighway" that securely connects health care practitioners, patients, hospitals, labs and diagnostic facilities, and pharmacies, giving health care providers a complete and reliable record of a patient's medical history.

The adoption of health information technology is a major component of **Governor Edward G. Rendell's** comprehensive health care reform plan, *Prescription for Pennsylvania*. The proposed strategic plan outlines the state's strategy to increase health information sharing among health care providers, and support providers' efforts to qualify for federal funds that will help them purchase and implement electronic medical record systems.

Implementing a health information exchange will allow health professionals across the state to see a patient's complete medical picture at the time and place of care, helping to improve the quality of care delivered. At the same time, it will lead to a decrease in unnecessary and costly tests.

"Having a statewide health information exchange brings us closer to realizing a 21st century medical system," Torregrossa said. "PHIX also allows the focus to return to the patient and not on the paperwork." Electronic medical records must be kept as private and secure as paper records. Patients will consent to having

their information accessible through the exchange and only authorized users can view them. The system will be constantly monitored and audited to ensure proper use.

The plan was developed by GOHCR in consultation with the PHIX Advisory Council; the PA eHealth Initiative, an outside advisory board comprised of health information experts; and other stakeholders. The plan outlines how the commonwealth will govern, finance and implement the initiative.

The [draft plan](#) can be viewed online, and community members are encouraged to review the plan and submit comments on how it can be improved. More information on PHIX can be found at www.pahealthinfoexchange.com.

Governor Rendell Announces New Emergency Notification System

Governor Edward G. Rendell recently announced the launch of AlertPA, an emergency notification system that helps to provide Pennsylvanians with timely information during an urgent situation.

"When emergencies, severe weather, and other life and health threatening incidents occur, Pennsylvanians can be among the first to know by signing up for AlertPA," said Governor Rendell. "The system allows citizens to choose to be notified about emergencies and other announcements."

AlertPA is a system that helps officials quickly send emergency text and email alerts, and other important notifications, to users to assist them in making informed decisions. Individuals can register for AlertPA by going to www.pa.gov and clicking on Alerts & Advisories. Users can choose the method of notification— pager, text or email – and select what type of information they would like to receive.

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