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Update on Strategic Plan for PA Health Information Exchange

The Governor's Office of Health Care Reform (GOHCR) is continuing to work on a final version of the strategic plan for the Pennsylvania Health Information Exchange, or PHIX. The plan will outline how to best transition to an electronic system of health records to improve efficiency, cut costs and provide better quality care.

GOHCR released a draft strategic plan on Nov. 30 and announced a 30-day public comment period that has now concluded. The comments received are being evaluated in revising the plan. Comments are available at www.ohcr.state.pa.us, along with an overview document used for public presentations and Frequently Asked Questions.

The creation of a health information exchange is expected to aid 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, helping to improve the quality of care delivered. At the same time, it will lead to a decrease in unnecessary and costly tests.

The adoption of health information technology is a major component of Governor Edward G. Rendell's comprehensive health care reform plan, *Prescription for Pennsylvania*. Up to \$17 million dollars in federal stimulus funding is available to help pay for the necessary infrastructure. The final strategic plan will outline 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.

The plan outlines how the commonwealth will govern, finance and implement the initiative. Privacy is a key consideration in developing the system.

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 it. The system will be constantly monitored and audited to ensure proper use.

More information on PHIX can be found at www.pahealthinfoexchange.com.

To learn more about how the federal economic stimulus will benefit Pennsylvania, visit www.recovery.pa.gov.

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