Pennsylvania State Board of Optometry Newsletter

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.* Up to $17 million dollars in federal stimulus funding is available to help pay for the necessary infrastructure. 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 at: www.gohcr.state.pa.us. Community members are encouraged to review the plan and submit comments on how it can be improved for a most efficient, high-quality health care system.

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

2010 Board Meeting Dates

- January 14, 2010
- March 10, 2010
- May 13, 2010
- July 14, 2010
- Sept. 16, 2010
- Nov. 10, 2010

Please contact the board office at (717) 783-7155 for specific location information.

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