



EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

*Connecting Pennsylvanians for  
Better Health:*  
**Recommendations from the  
Pennsylvania eHealth Initiative**

**Approved by  
PAeHI Board of Directors  
April 25, 2007**

**Pennsylvania eHealth Initiative**  
[www.paehi.org](http://www.paehi.org)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health: Recommendations from the Pennsylvania eHealth Initiative*

The goal of *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* is to facilitate the effective use of technology through electronic health records (EHRs), electronic patient health records (PHRs), and local information exchanges (HIEs) to meet patients' needs for safer, more effective, more affordable, more personalized healthcare. The following key issues must be addressed to connect Pennsylvanians for better health:

- Patient privacy and confidentiality
- Care Transformation/Process Excellence
- Interoperability of health information technology (HIT) applications
- Common statewide HIE infrastructure
- Clinical-decision support

The Pennsylvania eHealth Initiative (PAeHI) was created in 2005 as a voluntary public-private non-profit coalition to bring together Pennsylvania's healthcare and business stakeholders to develop a vision and a plan for the future of health information technology and exchange in Pennsylvania. To aid in the *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* development process, specific guiding principles were endorsed and provided the foundation for a long-term strategy:

**Guiding Principle 1: Patients come first.**

**Guiding Principle 2: Consumer privacy, security and confidentiality are paramount.**

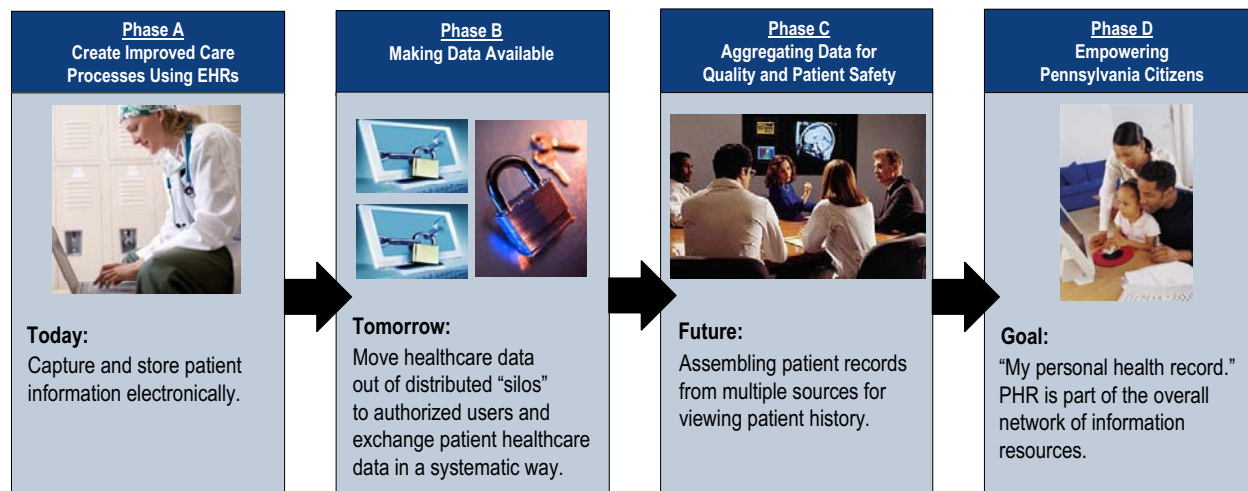
**Guiding Principle 3: Multi-stakeholder collaboration is needed to implement achievable and measurable initiatives in order to show early progress and value.**

PAeHI has identified the following key foundational roles that it will serve to connect Pennsylvanians for better health:

1. Identify opportunities for Pennsylvanians to use health IT and HIE to improve healthcare.
2. Educate the public providers and policy makers regarding the benefits and challenges of health IT and HIE.
3. Assist in the coordination of health IT efforts among Pennsylvania healthcare stakeholders.
4. Identify opportunities to coordinate with and benefit from federal initiatives.
5. Develop statewide consensus on established and emerging standards (e.g., data, communication and reporting).
6. Work with providers, payers, policy makers to define business cases (including return on investment) for health IT and HIE.

This report details key building blocks to enhance patient care and is designed to provide an overall view of the development of health information exchange in Pennsylvania. It is focused primarily on the incremental development of local healthcare information exchanges to create the basis for statewide connectivity. Diagram A depicts this phased approach to creating electronic aggregate health records for Pennsylvanians.

**Diagram A: Evolution of the Electronic Aggregate Health Record**



This report also offers recommendations for how the public and private sectors can exert critical leadership in this process and insight into the legislative and regulatory landscape.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the amount of activity at the national, state and local levels to create a more interconnected, electronic healthcare system. Increasingly, decisions regarding the scope and the direction of health IT and HIE initiatives will be made at the local level where healthcare is delivered. However, state-level coordination is required and should be focused on those functions that add clear value when performed at the state level. Recommended functions that can be implemented at the state level to support the PAeHI mission and Pennsylvania's local HIE initiatives include the following:

- Legal Interpretation and Consensus
- Semantic Interoperability and Technical Support
- Statewide Coordination
- Fundraising and Administration of Statewide Funding
- Education and Marketing

The Commonwealth, along with foundational local efforts, can play an important role in transforming the way that healthcare is delivered to patients in Pennsylvania. It is important to note that *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* provides a blueprint and a set of recommended strategies to foster HIE. For the goals outlined to be achieved, however, leadership at all levels is required in order to continue this dialogue and facilitate the activities needed in Pennsylvania to create an interconnected healthcare system.

## Conclusion

There is an expansion of Pennsylvania HIT and HIE initiatives currently in operation or in varied stages of development. Now is the time to act to ensure these initiatives are coordinated across the state and do not develop into “islands of information.” This report has been designed to capture and provide an overall view of health information exchange in Pennsylvania, focused primarily on the development of healthcare information exchange to create the basis for statewide connectivity. *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* delivers a unified consensus-driven strategy for future development of HIEs and incorporates the discussions, recommendations and admonitions of the PAeHI governance, committees and participants. Additionally, this report promotes an incremental approach for building a strong foundation upon which leadership in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania can transform healthcare.

In order to maintain the momentum established over the past two years and to implement *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health*, there are immediate activities that should be performed. First and foremost is the establishment of dedicated staff and resources to support PAeHI. Other immediate actions that can then be performed by PAeHI include:

- Development of a marketing and education plan for *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health*
- Creation of a consumer brochure providing information about *Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* and HIE
- Development of resource guides and tools for local HIEs
- Form a task force to study existing Pennsylvania state laws (e.g., privacy, security, medical records, etc.) and make recommendations on needed changes to encourage the widespread adoption of EHRs
- Coordination with the Commonwealth to develop a Request for Proposal process for local HIE funding

*Connecting Pennsylvanians for Better Health* provides the structure and tools to implement the recommendations and deliver success. Success can be defined many ways; however, it can be summarized as the long-term tangible improvements in healthcare quality, safety, and costs through focused, collaborative incremental efforts. Achieving success will be possible with the collaborative contributions and efforts of many Pennsylvania public and private partners, each with a sense of urgency and commitment to advance health information exchange.