A Critical Part of America’s National Public Health Infrastructure

The Strategic Health Information Exchange Collaborative (SHIEC), the national collaborative of 80+ non-profit and government health information exchanges (HIEs), is demonstrating the value of HIEs as a critical part of America’s national public health infrastructure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Aggregation and Alerting on COVID Test Results** – HIEs are receiving and aggregating COVID-19 test results from labs and sending real-time alerts on test results to providers, health care organizations and public health officials. While the current situation is fluid, with more HIEs ramping up for receiving and alerting on test results each week, SHIEC HIEs are well-established in their communities as a resource for aggregating and alerting on test results and care episodes. Last year, SHIEC HIEs exchanged more than 3.3 billion messages with participants, including nearly 500 million real-time alerts on results. Pushing timely data on test results is an essential part of the national response to COVID-19.

- **Development of COVID-19 Coding and Technical Support** – With large scale management of data from a global pandemic, it is essential to utilize technology that enables machine-to-machine exchange of information. This requires the development and implementation of coding and technical processes that can manage the tremendous amount of data generated by testing and treating COVID-19 patients, and extracting data on tests and patients. SHIEC’s technical team is actively working to ensure that data is captured, available and interoperable.

- **Predictive Analytics** – With the aggregation of test results, HIEs are applying predictive analytics to identify where outbreaks are centered to help guide local and national public health efforts. SHIEC member HIEs are ramping up to provide this valuable service in partnership with states and the federal government. Population health analytics is a common service provided by HIEs in their communities, and there is no other national organization that is ready to provide essential analysis of test results to monitor the progress of the pandemic.

- **Community Information Sharing and Collaboration** – HIEs serve their communities as neutral, unbiased data trustees. HIEs have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, posting critical information on their websites and working collaboratively with providers, labs and public health officials in their markets. SHIEC is working collaboratively with organizations such as ASTHO, the national association of public health departments and officials, and Leading Age, the national association of post-acute care and nursing facilities.
Support HIEs As a Key Part of National Emergency Infrastructure

America’s HIEs play an increasingly valuable role in communities across the nation, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to aggregate and distribute critical information when and where it is needed. Here are four areas of regulatory and financial support HHS can provide to HIEs across the country to accelerate this work now:

- **Recognize The Critical Role of HIEs In The National Infrastructure** – HIEs facilitate the exchange of billions of messages among hospitals, labs and providers today. In addition, most HIEs are connected to much more than doctors and hospitals, extending connectivity across a care continuum to first responders, post-acute facilities and human services agencies. Many HIEs also work very closely with their state Medicaid agencies and with state and local health departments. However, these successes need to be replicated in communities and states across the country. No other national network has the turnkey ability to accelerate a national network of health information exchange.

- **Encourage organizations with data to share critical information with HIEs** – Many HIEs today are aggregating COVID-19 testing and alerting providers and public health officials of results. In some states and among some clinical laboratory networks, critical testing data is not flowing to HIEs due to archaic corporate policies that limit access to data. Not only do these policies restrict the valuable aggregation of COVID-19 data, they violate the spirit of HHS rules on information blocking. In addition, while many HIEs are sharing valuable data with their state Medicaid agencies to track Medicaid patients diagnosed with COVID-19, a national emergency infrastructure should encourage all Medicaid agencies as well as public health organizations to connect and work with their local HIEs.

- **Build National Emergency Preparedness on What’s Working Today** – HIEs received less than five percent of federal dollars spent on health information technology over the past 10 years, yet today America’s HIEs serve more than 92 percent of the U.S. population and are the only national network that pushes real-time data for improved clinical decision making. HIEs have played a critical role when patients have been displaced by natural disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires, and they are playing a critical role today in the COVID-19 crisis. One of the lessons learned already in the COVID-19 pandemic is the need to collect, standardize and distribute data swiftly. As we learn from this pandemic and develop a national emergency infrastructure, we should build on and support the proven work of America’s HIEs.

- **Fast-track Implementation of COVID-19 Coding and Technical Support** – COVID-19 testing and treatment is generating massive amounts of data. We anticipate that COVID-19 will become seasonal, and the only way to manage the information that this disease and pandemic presents is to standardize machine-readable, interoperable data. HIEs are working with other professionals and organizations in the development and implementation of coding for the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19, and action is needed now to standardize coding of COVID-19 to prepare for the amount of data that will need to be managed in months and years to come.
SHIEC HIEs Cover >92% of the U.S. Population

Connecting Whole Communities—HIEs are designed to provide critical information in real time. By facilitating the real-time electronic transfer of clinical information, including test results and hospital admissions to providers and public health authorities, HIEs provide critical infrastructure for those working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response.
Critical Role of HIEs During COVID-19 Response

Aggregation and Alerting on COVID-19 Test Results
HIEs are providing real-time test result alerts from labs and state health departments to providers and public health officials leading to early intervention with infected patients and improved understanding of community transmission.

Predictive Analytics
HIEs are employing population health analytics to identify where outbreaks are centered to guide public health and community efforts.

Community Coordination
HIEs are on the frontline with state and local stakeholders, coordinating discussions among communities to ensure the right information is flowing to those who need it, as quickly and effectively as possible.