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# eHealth News from the NITC eHealth Council

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Nebraska receives \$6.8 million grant for health information exchange	1	<p><b>Nebraska receives \$6.8 million grant for health information exchange</b></p> <p>On March 15, 2010, Gov. Dave Heineman announced that the state was awarded more than \$6.8 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant funding for the statewide health information exchange.</p>
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NeHII featured in <i>Paper Kills 2.0</i>	4	<p>As the statewide integrator and lead health information exchange for Nebraska, the Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NeHII) provides the technical infrastructure for statewide electronic health exchange. Grant funding will help expand the statewide system allowing for the secure exchange of health information among NeHII users. It will also help develop consumer education materials and will provide funding for the Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Network (SNBHIN) and the Nebraska Statewide Telehealth Network.</p>
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Wide River Technology Extension Center receives funding, fills leadership positions	5	<p>Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy is the state representative on the NeHII board. The Nebraska Information Technology Commission, chaired by the Lt. Governor, provided a portion of NeHII's seed capital through its grant program.</p>
Metro Community College participates in Community College Consortia program	6	<p>"Medical information is the next frontier for information technology," Lt. Gov. Sheehy said. "A seamless electronic system allows for faster and more complete sharing of medical records, lab and diagnostic tests, and prescriptions among medical professionals. This award will help expand that network. We are pleased to be partnering with Nebraska's public and private health providers on a project that benefits individual Nebraskans and their families."</p> <p>The NeHII exchange connects the electronic medical records already used by many health care providers and makes them more useful by allowing doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other medical professionals to access patient data quickly. NeHII is a HIPAA compliant exchange that was launched as a pilot project in February 2009 and expanded to a statewide project in July 2009.</p>

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Today, NeHII includes records of more than 1.5 million patients of hospitals including: Alegant Health, Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Methodist Health System, and The Nebraska Medical Center, all of Omaha, as well as Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital in Hastings. Work to add Great Plains Regional Medical Center in North Platte is underway.

To date, the system has processed more than 96 percent of the information requests received in less than two seconds.

NeHII President Dr. Harris Frankel, said, "This is indeed very exciting. These funds will be used to continue the statewide expansion of NeHII, which has largely depended on private dollars. The federal grant funds will allow NeHII to continue the momentum we have enjoyed the past year in bringing this health information exchange to the state of Nebraska. We remain poised to be a national leader in the private, secure exchange of health information at the point of care, to enhance the quality, safety, efficiency and coordination of care for all Nebraskans, while at the same time enhancing efforts directed at public and population health."

NeHII was developed with the support of nearly 20 hospitals across the state, as well as pharmacies, health insurers and medical organizations across the state including the physicians who are part of the Nebraska Medical Association's Electronic Health Records Task Force.

## eHealth Council develops operational plan

The eHealth Council has developed an operational plan which will guide the implementation of Nebraska's State Health Information Exchange Cooperative Agreement. The operational plan has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. Plans will likely undergo revisions before receiving approval from the Office of the National Coordinator. The plan is available from the Nebraska Information Technology Commission website ([www.nitc.nebraska.gov](http://www.nitc.nebraska.gov)).

Nebraska's approach to establishing a statewide health

information exchange includes:

- **Utilizing a Statewide Integrator.** As the state's only active health information exchange with a statewide focus, the Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NeHII) will act as the statewide integrator and lead health information exchange (HIE) for Nebraska.
- **Supporting Existing Specialty Exchanges and Regional Health Information Organizations.** Stakeholders in Nebraska have invested in specialty exchanges, including the Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Exchange (SNBHIN) and the Nebraska Statewide Telehealth Network. SNBHIN will connect behavioral health providers in the 16-county Region V service area, with future plans to offer the applications to other regions in the state as time and resources allow. These efforts will be supported and leveraged. The Nebraska Statewide Telehealth Network connects the state's hospitals, providing two way-interactive video for patient consultations, continuing medical education, and administrative meetings.
- **Integrating with Medicaid.** The Department of Health and Human Services Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care has submitted a HIT Planning APD (Advanced Planning Document) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to initiate the process to access funds available only through state Medicaid agencies. In the short term, these planning funds will allow Medicaid to plan the approach to development of the Medicaid role in both supporting the statewide integrator in achievement of their stated goals, and to explore the possibilities for Medicaid in reaching its goals to fully adopt electronic capabilities commensurate with national HIT/HIE objectives. In the longer term, additional HIT/HIE funds are available through CMS to Medicaid agencies that will considerably further the development and implementation of e-health capabilities.
- **Supporting Meaningful Use.** Demonstrating Meaningful Use of certified electronic health records is central to ARRA-funded programs, including the State HIE Cooperative Agreement program. Nebraska's statewide

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health information exchange is committed to providing the applications necessary for eligible providers and hospitals to meet Stage One requirements in year one.

- **Integrating with Public Health.** Public health is a state responsibility and needs to be integrated into efforts to create a statewide health information network. Nebraska has invested in several systems which will interface with the statewide health information network. Discussions with public health representatives are underway to determine public health requirements and to develop a solution that meets those requirements.
- **Coordinating with Other Efforts.** NeHII and the eHealth Council will coordinate with Wide River Technology Extension Center and Metro Community College, a participant in the Community College Consortia program. Issues related to broadband access will be addressed through Nebraska's Broadband Mapping and Planning project.
- **Providing and Documenting Value.** The business models of SNBHIN and NeHII are based on the development of solutions which are cost-effective and provide the greatest return on investment.
- **Demonstrating Sustainability.** Nebraska's integrator, NeHII, has been operational since the spring of 2009 and has a sustainable business model. Future growth will solidify NeHII's sustainability. Although not yet operational, SNBHIN has developed a business plan showing sustainability.
- **Safeguarding Privacy and Security.** Health information exchanges in Nebraska have carefully developed privacy and security policies which are compliant with HIPAA, the HITECH Act, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Additionally, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' Licensure Unit, the Nebraska Attorney General's Office, and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Civil Rights share responsibilities for health information security and privacy enforcement.
- **Complying with Standards and Certification Processes.** NeHII and the state's regional and specialty

exchanges are committed to the utilization of national standards and certification.

- **Providing governance.** In Nebraska, both the private and public sectors will share responsibilities for governance of health information exchange. This type of relationship between state government and the private sector has been described as the Private Sector-Led Electronic HIE with Government Collaboration model.

## Highlights

Nebraska has already made great strides in developing health information exchange in the state. The following information highlights Nebraska's current status and Nebraska's future plans.

- As of Feb. 2010, eight hospitals with a total of 2,370 beds are participating in statewide health information exchange through NeHII. These hospitals account for approximately 36% of the hospital beds in Nebraska.
- As of Feb. 2010, over 1.5 million patients have health information available through NeHII. This includes 1.1 million Nebraskans—over 60% of Nebraska's population.
- As of Feb. 2010, 415 physicians and staff are using NeHII's Electronic Medical Record or Virtual Health Record.
- As of Feb. 2010, over 3,000 prescriptions have been sent electronically, faxed or printed through NeHII.
- By the end of the third quarter of 2010, at least five additional hospitals are expected to be participating in NeHII, bringing the percentage of hospital beds in participating hospitals to 44%.
- Early in year one of the grant, NeHII will have the capability to connect to the NHIN.
- By October 2010, SNBHIN is expected to launch and begin piloting. SNBHIN will connect to NeHII, creating a statewide health information exchange.

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- Public health officials have been meeting to define requirements and will work with NeHII and NeHII's vendor to develop a public health application.
- By the end of year one of the grant, six labs and imaging facilities are expected to be connected to NeHII.
- State HIE and Medicaid planning efforts will be coordinated. Nebraska is expected to complete its State Medicaid HIT Plan for Medicaid by December 2010.

Stakeholders are invited to submit comments by May 6. Comments should be e-mailed to Anne Byers ([anne.byers@nebraska.gov](mailto:anne.byers@nebraska.gov)).

## NeHII featured in *Paper Kills 2.0*

Statewide HIE continues to expand across Nebraska as NeHII adds additional stakeholders and receives regular inquiries from interested parties including pharmacies, skilled nursing/rehab facilities, hospitals and physicians. During the month of March, NeHII increased the number of physicians and staff using the Virtual Health Record (VHR) by 62 resulting in a total of 350 physician and staff users. EMR usage continues to grow with an additional seven users added during the month of March.

Recently the Center for Healthcare Transformation and the Gingrich Group released its new book, *Paper Kills 2.0 – How Health IT Can Help Save your Life and Your Money*. Chapter 12, *Finally: A Look into One of the Nation's First Statewide Health Information Exchanges* chronicles the work and experiences of the NeHII stakeholders as they implemented the first HIE to launch with a complete operational set of features and functions. With a Foreword by Newt Gingrich and Tom Daschle, *Paper Kills 2.0* has been praised for its insights into technologies that will transform healthcare.

A growing number of states have requested a copy of NeHII's Privacy and Security Policies, which are offered at no charge, provided states that modify the policies for their use share those changes with NeHII. An agreement is

executed with each state prior to sharing the policies. The ability to utilize policies created by NeHII saves states valuable time and money as they launch their HIE efforts.

Deb Bass and Chris Henkenius have been presenters at several national and state events and maintain a busy schedule speaking about their experience with NeHII, as well as future plans for the exchange. If you are contacted by interested parties, Deb Bass and Chris Henkenius are available for community presentations. Deb or Chris may be contacted at 402.346.1505.

## SNBHIN begins design work

With the signing of a contract with NextGen Healthcare Information Systems this past December, the Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Network (SNBHIN) is beginning work on the design of the Central Data Repository (CDR) where the core data set and behavioral health care record will be available via web portal for providers participating in the SNBHIN Network. NextGen has made several visits over the past month to refine workflow templates needed with Blue Valley Behavioral Health, the Community Mental Health Center and BryanLGH for development of the pilot project. It is anticipated beta testing of the site will begin in late summer with a "go live" date of October 1, 2010. The project will be expanded to other behavioral health providers in the 16-county Region V service area after the completion of the pilot. As time and resources allow, with future plans to offer the applications to other regions in the state as time and resources allow.

## LB849 eliminates barrier

After the eHealth Council's Health Information Security and Privacy Committee identified Nebraska's 180-day limit on authorizations for the release of health information as a barrier to the exchange of health information, Lt. Governor Sheehy worked with Senator Gloor to introduce legislation to eliminate this restriction.

On April 13, 2010, Governor Heineman signed LB849

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which contains a provision eliminating the 180-day limit on authorizations for the release of health information. The 180-day limit is more restrictive than current federal law and creates a barrier to electronic health information exchange. LB849 will be beneficial to the state's health information exchanges, including the Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NeHII), the Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Network (SNBHIN), and the Southeastern Nebraska Health Information Exchange (SENHIE).

Health information exchanges in Nebraska have carefully developed privacy and security policies which are compliant with HIPAA, the HI TECH Act, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 42, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Most health information exchanges use either opt-in or opt-out policies for consumer consent. The opt-in approach is one where consumers are required to sign an authorization acknowledging they are permitting their data to be released to other providers in the HIE. The Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information is required by CFR 42 to use an opt-in approach. Health information exchanges using an opt-in approach are required by State law to get reauthorization every 180 days. This increases the administrative burden of the health information exchange. In addition, once an authorization has expired, there is greater potential for a break in accessibility to patient information, since the records are no longer available for exchange until such time as a re-authorization is obtained.

The state's largest health information exchange, NeHII, uses an opt-out approach. An opt-out policy for consumer consent simply stated means the health information is in the HIE unless the consumer takes a signature-required action to have their information excluded from the HIE. The default is set to include the information in the system unless the consumer takes action to opt-out of the health information exchange. NeHII currently doesn't include protected sets of health information which require specific authorization for disclosure. Removing the 180-day limit would make it easier for NeHII to include protected sets of health information and would help keep those records authorized for release more available for exchange to all providers in Nebraska on a continuous basis.

LB849 preserves patient privacy rights. Without the 180-day limit on authorizations for the release of health information, HIPAA Privacy rule requirements would apply, permitting individuals to state an expiration date or event. Patients retain the right to revoke authorizations to release health information.

## **Wide River Technology Extension Center receives funding, fills leadership positions**

CIMRO of Nebraska is pleased to introduce Wide River Technology Extension Center (Wide River TEC) as Nebraska's Regional Extension Center for Health Information Technology (HIT). Regional Extension Centers were established as part of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act. \$6.6 million was awarded to CIMRO of Nebraska, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for the state of Nebraska, as a four-year cooperative agreement grant from The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) to establish Wide River TEC to assist Nebraska healthcare providers with implementing and using Electronic Health Records (EHRs).

Wide River TEC will offer technical assistance, guidance and information on best practices to support and accelerate healthcare providers' efforts to become meaningful users of EHRs, as well as the ability to exchange health information with other providers and agencies. Wide River TEC services will be available to all healthcare providers in the state, including those who already have an EHR in place. Priority will be given to Nebraska practitioners providing primary care in individual and small-group practices; Critical Access Hospitals providing primary care; rural health clinics; Federally Qualified Health Centers; and other settings that serve uninsured, underinsured and medically underserved populations. Individual provider education and training will be conducted through onsite visits and individualized technical assistance. A team approach will be utilized, with highly-trained nursing informatics and technical specialists providing technical assistance.

"We are very pleased and excited to have received the award to serve as Nebraska's Regional Extension Center.

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This is a great opportunity for CIMRO of Nebraska and we look forward to partnering with stakeholders throughout the state to build on technology efforts already underway. We are extremely delighted to offer assistance, resources and support to help enhance the quality and value of healthcare in Nebraska through EHR adoption and implementation,” stated Tina Georgy, RN, MS, Chief Executive Officer of CIMRO of Nebraska.

Wide River TEC recently announced the appointment of two leadership staff. Dr. Bob Rauner has joined the newly-established organization as the Principal Clinical Coordinator. Todd Searls, most recently with National Jewish Health (NJH) in Denver, Colo., has been named the Director.

Efforts to establish Wide River TEC as a distinct business unit within the CIMRO of Nebraska corporation are currently underway. CIMRO of Nebraska will be contacting eligible physicians and providers in the near future. The Wide River TEC Web site will offer updates on the launch of the organization and updates on Wide River TEC progress. Visit [www.widerivertec.org](http://www.widerivertec.org) soon for additional details. If you are a Nebraska practitioner interested in learning more about Wide River TEC's services, visit the Wide River TEC Web site to download the commitment form.

## **Metro Community College participates in Community College Consortia program**

The Office of the National Coordinator announced grants in April 2010 to establish Community College Consortia to establish or expand health information technology (health IT) education programs. Metro Community College is participating in the consortium led by Cuyahoga Community College District.

Academic programs may be offered through traditional on-campus instruction or distance learning modalities, or combinations thereof. Training will be designed to be completed within six months or less. The programs will be flexibly implemented to provide each trainee with skills and competencies that he/she does not already possess. Training is expected to begin by September 30, 2010.



To receive *eHealth News* from the NITC eHealth Council, please contact Anne Byers, by calling 402 471-3805 or e-mailing [anne.byers@nebraska.gov](mailto:anne.byers@nebraska.gov).

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