



October 27, 2008

Dear Colleague,

The Immunization Information Systems (IIS) community has been and continues to be a leader in the exchange of immunization health data between public and private data systems. The successes with data exchange after Hurricane Katrina and exchanges with provider systems are just two examples. Additionally, the HL7 Implementation Guide for Immunization is identified in the HITSP standards selection process as a widely implemented standard for interoperable communication. At the same time, this widespread use has highlighted some weaknesses in the current implementation guide. Implementers must contend with differing interpretation of some sections, requiring negotiation when connecting to a new system.

Over a year ago, the American Immunization Registry Association (AIRA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began an update of the current 2.3 Implementation Guide to a 2.5 version to address these weaknesses. Progress has been made but the process is very time consuming and labor intensive. As a result, CDC obtained resources to fund a staff person to work with AIRA on the completion of the guide.

A process has been developed that outlines specific steps for completing work on the revised implementation guide to be coordinated by Rob Savage. The goal is to apply the expertise of the IIS community toward informing, reviewing and approving the changes made to the guide. Rob will coordinate with the AIRA Data Exchange Standards workgroups to move this effort forward. In addition, he will lead the effort to have the Implementation Guide balloted by the HL7 Organization.

We want to invite your participation in this effort! You do not need to be a member of AIRA to participate. There are a number of ways you can be a part of this important work. We need community-wide participation in the work groups that will carry this project forward. Each workgroup meets once a month for an hour or as required and will have homework to accomplish between meetings. The Messaging Workgroup will assure that the message structure aligns with HL7 standards. The Data Definitions Workgroup will assure that the vocabulary is specified and constrained to provide consistency between applications. Consider joining one of the above workgroups to have your voice heard!

Another way to be involved is to identify issues or gaps in the existing Implementation Guide that you feel need to be addressed in the new Guide and submit them for consideration as possible inclusions. You can do that via a special page on the AIRA web site at http://www.immregistries.org/news/hit_index.phtml. Your submissions will be reviewed, tracked and resolved by the Data Exchange Standards Steering Committee and the workgroups.

To join a Data Exchange Standards workgroup contact one or both of the co-Chairs of the workgroups listed below. The time is now! We hope you will consider joining and look forward to your participation. Thank you!

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Warren Williams (wxx4@cdc.gov)
CDC/NCIRD/IISB Informatics Team Leader

Shawn Box (shawn.box@maine.gov), Chair
Data Exchange Standards Steering Committee

Messaging Workgroup
Cochair: Emily Peterson (emily.peterson@state.mn.us)
Cochair: Alean Kirnak (akirnak@swpartners.com)
Meets 3rd Wednesday at 1:30 PM Eastern

Data Definitions Workgroup
Cochair: Kelly Pearson (Kellyn.Pearson@UCHSC.edu)
Cochair: Rob Savage (robsavage@tds.net)
Meets 1st Thursday at 4:00 PM Eastern