



## **News for Immediate Release**

**July 18, 2012**

### **Pennsylvania Labs Positioned to Move Forward with Electronic Health Information Exchange**

**Harrisburg** - The Pennsylvania eHealth Collaborative today released a study that shows most laboratories operating in the state are capable of sending test results electronically.

The eHealth Collaborative is working to ensure that all eligible providers in Pennsylvania have at least one option for receiving structured lab results.

"It is encouraging to see that labs in Pennsylvania are sending lab results electronically," said Robert Torres, Pennsylvania's Health Information Technology Coordinator. "We know from previous research studies that health information exchange (HIE) can increase efficiency, improve quality and safety of care, reduce costs and make care more convenient for patients."

The survey, conducted earlier this year, captured data from 93 percent (480) of Pennsylvania's 516 independent labs and critical care hospital-associated labs. Of the responding labs, 80 percent (384) stated that they are electronically transmitting lab results. Another 7 percent (34) plan to do so in the future.

Most labs that are exchanging information are using either a web portal or a hub. A small number are using point-to-point exchange. Most labs indicated that they have more than one delivery method available to them.

The study also showed that while labs are exchanging information electronically, most of the responding labs were not familiar with the broader concept of a health information exchange (HIE). HIE is defined by national and Pennsylvania standards as the electronic movement of health-related information among unaffiliated organizations according to nationally recognized standards. Pennsylvania was awarded \$17.1 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help establish a health information exchange.

"As the eHealth Collaborative moves forward, we will continue to work with labs to assist them in extending their ability to share lab results with providers in rural and underserved areas and to create new options to connect where needed," Torres said. "This is in keeping with our statewide plan of creating a 'network of networks.'"

According to the study, 37 percent (36 of 97) of labs that are not currently exchanging health care information electronically are planning to go electronic at some point in the future. Of those:

- 31 percent (11 of 36) plan to go electronic within the next six months.
- 33 percent (12 of 36) plan to go electronic in the next 7-12 months.
- 36 percent (13 of 36) plan to go electronic later than the next 12 months.

The eHealth Collaborative will reach out to these labs in the coming months to check on their plans and to help them address any obstacles they may encounter.

Also, 13 percent (61 of 480) of labs stated that they did not plan to move to electronic exchange of lab results. The reasons they gave included cost, lack of technology expertise or interest, and concerns about privacy and security of electronic transactions.

The eHealth Collaborative will continue to communicate with all labs in the state to encourage use of electronic health information exchange.

From now through Aug. 15, health care providers – including labs - can receive a free year of DIRECT messaging services through an approved health information service provider (HISP). DIRECT provides a simple, secure and standards-based method to encourage electronic exchange of health information among health care providers, particularly those providers that do not have the resources or technical capacity to engage in more comprehensive health information exchange.

Providers can learn more about DIRECT messaging at [www.paehealthcollab.com](http://www.paehealthcollab.com).

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