

11-05

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

### Local Health Department Involvement in Meaningful Use Preparation

#### Policy

Electronic Health Record (EHR) data transmitted to public health will be used to identify and respond to disease patterns, contain the spread of infectious disease, and improve efforts to prevent threats to the health of the public. Throughout much of the United States, these activities will be performed by local health departments (LHDs). It is important that these LHDs receive EHR data with the timeliness and content they need to effectively perform these activities. Therefore, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) urges the following in order to ensure the successful use of meaningful use (MU) data:

- Local health departments should be included throughout the development of public health-associated MU EHR information and processes and be provided with the resources for training, staffing, and software support to manage and use this information for protecting and improving population health;
- NACCHO encourages the related efforts of the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for health information technology (HIT) to ensure that public health standards are included in certified meaningful use HIT and EHRs; and,
- NACCHO encourages the increasing collaboration between numerous stakeholders at the national, state and local levels involved in the enactment of MU, and intends to be an active participant in this collaboration on behalf of LHDs.

#### Justification

NACCHO recognizes and supports ongoing federal and state efforts to rapidly accelerate the adoption of HIT and EHRs based on provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Provisions for a well-needed EHR incentive program for Medicare and Medicaid eligible professionals and hospitals to receive incentive payments for the meaningful use of HIT and EHRs are included in the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (the HITECH Act) of ARRA.

Significant funds and resources are being used to implement data collection and exchange tools nationwide through the related efforts of the ONC to ensure that public health standards are included in certified meaningful use HIT and EHRs. These sweeping measures are expected to redefine the healthcare information landscape and qualitatively improve healthcare delivery in the nation, and promise to improve the delivery of public health services at the state and local levels as well.

NACCHO acknowledges the increasing collaboration between ONC, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, many state partners, and others involved since the enactment of the HITECH Act. LHDs are rapidly recognizing the need for greater involvement as electronic laboratory reporting, syndromic surveillance, and immunization data are expected to increase exponentially.



NACCHO anticipates insufficient readiness at many LHDs, including larger LHDs with significant prior HIT infrastructure, to accept and use this data.

NACCHO's expertise in representing LHDs on a variety of issues is vital to ensure national policies are successfully implemented on the local level. NACCHO intends to partner with the above organizations to identify and address the specific needs of LHDs in addition to those of state health departments to receive and use MU data. Funding and resources commensurate with those focused on EHR implementation will be necessary to design, upgrade, and/or implement surveillance and research technologies in LHDs. Therefore, there is a need to continue to strengthen the presence and input of LHDs on national and state work and advisory groups discussing implementation of EHRs/HIT and public health readiness for meaningful use data. This collaboration will stimulate discussion on this matter and result in successful incorporation of LHDs in the national HIT effort, as well as improve the outcomes of the national HIT effort.

**Record of Action**

*Approved by NACCHO Board of Directors*

*July 2011*