News for Immediate Release

June 28, 2012

New Program Will Encourage Health Care Providers to Share Patient Information Electronically

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania eHealth Collaborative has announced an innovative new grant program to encourage doctors and other health care providers to begin securely exchanging health information over the Internet using DIRECT messaging.

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.

From now through Aug. 15, health care providers can receive a free year of DIRECT messaging services through an approved health information service provider (HISP). The PA eHealth Collaborative will provide HISPs with $250 for each provider they register.

"Technology and the Internet have advanced the capability to exchange health information electronically. However, many doctors and other health care providers still rely on fax machines and the mail to transmit patient records and other health information," said Robert Torres, Health Information Technology Coordinator for the state. "Depending on their needs, DIRECT can be a solution, or a first step toward more robust and advanced types of health information exchange."

As many as 8,000 providers could potentially take advantage of the program. This includes hospitals and health systems, community clinics, doctors and other licensed providers, pharmacies and independent laboratories.

DIRECT can be used to transmit patient care records, referrals, discharge summaries and other clinical documents. Both the sender and recipient must be DIRECT subscribers.

Health information exchange (HIE) is 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.

The PA eHealth Collaborative is working to meet federal requirements and enable the use of information technology to advance HIE, which has been shown to

improve healthcare quality and efficiency, ensure patient safety and provide secure, confidential access to health information for making the best possible health decisions.

For more information, visit the PA eHealth Collaborative website at www.paehealthcollab.com.

Media contact: Dan Egan, 717-772-4237

###