PHDSC RELEASES FINDINGS FROM AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PRIVACY ISSUES FACING PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

BALTIMORE, MD – May 29, 2009 - The Public Health Data Standards Consortium (PHDSC) announced today the release of a report documenting current and emerging privacy-related issues that state and local public health agencies face, as the country continues to move towards a wider adoption and implementation of health IT, electronic health record systems and health information exchanges.

The report, titled "*Health Information Privacy in State Public Health Agencies: A Review of Past, Present and Future Privacy-Related Issues and Priorities Affecting Public Health Practice*" was the result of an assessment of privacy practices and current and emerging issues as reported by a sample of privacy officers of state public health agencies across the country.

The purpose of the project was five-fold: 1) identify and document health information privacy issues that state public health agencies faced in the past five-six years, since the implementation of HIPAA Privacy, and how they addressed them; 2) identify and discuss ongoing health information privacy issues that agencies are currently facing, and how they are being addressed; 3) document and discuss new health information privacy issues that agencies see coming, as more health information is expected to be collected, accessed, used and disclosed electronically, and how they see these issues might be addressed; 4) identify and document health information privacy issues that agencies will face and that are associated with their participation in a regional exchange (RHIO) network or other health information exchange (HIE) network, and how they see these issues might be addressed; and 5) identify and discuss multi-state and national issues related to health information privacy and public health and that agencies considered critical to be addressed, and how they see these issues might be addressed.

"In the five years since the implementation of HIPAA, public health privacy officers have become invaluable resources within state agencies, as well as across states. Being able to identify the type of privacy issues they are

currently facing, and the emerging issues they see coming in the near future was an important first step in developing a more comprehensive public health privacy framework" said Walter G. Suarez., MD, MPH, President of the Consortium and a lead author of the report.

The project was implemented under the direction of the Consortium's Privacy, Security and Data Exchange (PSDE) Committee. "There are a number of important findings and recommendations in this report, and being able to act upon them will be one of our priorities in 2009" said Vicki Hohner, MBA, Co-Chair of the PSDE Committee.

The report and a description of the project are available from the Consortium's website at www.phdsc.org

The **Public Health Data Standards Consortium** is a national non-profit membership-based organization of federal, state and local health agencies; professional associations; academia; public and private sector organizations; international members; and individuals. The Consortium *promotes* the electronic connectivity between public health and clinical care via interoperable Electronic Health Record (EHR) Systems (EHR-S) and the integration of health-related data systems to meet the health data needs of public and private organizations, agencies and individuals; *represents* public health interests and needs in standards development organizations, data content committees, and standards harmonization and external certification bodies; *represents* public health interests and needs on issues of privacy, confidentiality and information security; *identifies* priorities for the new national standards for population health; and *educates* the public health community about standards and the health information technology community about public health. For more information about the Consortium, go to http://www.phdsc.org

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