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Consortium Releases Business Case for Public Health Participation in the National Health IT Standardization Process

Baltimore, MD – January 7, 2010 – The Public Health Data Standards Consortium (PHDSC, the Consortium) announced today the release of a detailed ***Business Case on the Role of Public Health in the National Health IT Standardization Process***. The Business Case is released at this critical time when, under the HITECH Act, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT is accelerating the creation of a nationwide infrastructure for health information exchange to aid state governments in the development of information exchange capabilities within and across their jurisdictions. Data standards being established to support the health information exchange infrastructure enable accurate and cost-effective information sharing between clinical and public health data systems.

The Business Case published by the Consortium is targeted at public health leadership, decision makers at the local, state and federal levels, national HIT leaders, leadership of HIT standardization entities, professional associations, academia, and public health and clinical professionals. It describes in detail the reasons behind the limited interoperability of public health information systems -- public health professionals, especially those from state and local public health agencies, continue to be under-represented at national HIT standardization activities and within national HIT standards organizations where the real language of interoperability is developed.

*“Public health needs can only be communicated effectively to standards developers, and, in turn, built into standards, if public health professionals who know these needs participate in the HIT standardization process. **There is a need to increase participation of representatives from state and local public health in national HIT standardization activities**, so that national interoperable HIT standards and certified standards-based HIT products will sustain data needs for public health decision support and services delivery,”* said Ms. Kathleen Cook, PHDSC Vice-President for State and Local Agencies and Information Manager of the Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department. *“Additionally, **a strong, coordinated public health voice needs to be built to help ensure that HIT products developed as a result of HIT standardization efforts will meet the needs of all stakeholders**”* she noted.

With its in-depth analysis, the Business Case describes 1) the current state of HIT adoption and standards development in public health; 2) the national HIT standardization process and the current level of public health involvement; 3) the barriers for participation by state and local public health in this process; and 4) the proposed business strategy to assure and maximize their participation.

“We propose a business strategy which maximizes the impact of those who can participate on behalf of public health in the national HIT standardization process, and informs/educates and obtains input, as best as possible, from those who cannot,” stated Dr. Walter Suarez, PHDSC

President and Director of Health IT Strategy for Kaiser Permanente. *“Our goal is to raise the awareness of HIT stakeholders to the critical role of federal, state and local public health agencies in the national HIT standardization process. We anticipate that our strategy will serve to mobilize the public health community to engage in HIT standardization processes; thus assuring the development and adoption of interoperable, standards-based HIT products to create a national infrastructure for health information exchange,”* confirmed Dr. Anna Orlova, the Executive Director of PHDSC.

For a copy of the PHDSC **Business Case: The Role of Public Health in National Health IT Standardization**, please visit our website at http://www.phdsc.org/standards/business_case.asp

The **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. No newcomer to the HIT standards sector, PHDSC has been actively involved in the standards development, harmonization and adoption efforts since its inception in 1999. Working with representatives from local, state and federal public health agencies and various professional associations, private sector organizations and individuals, PHDSC leadership and members have been firm advocates for public health interests in HIT standards.

The Consortium is committed to bringing a common voice from the public health community to the national efforts of standardization of health information technology and population health data in order to improve individual and community health. To fulfill its mission the Consortium **identifies priorities for new national standards** for population health data; **promotes integrating health-related data systems** to meet the needs of public and private organizations, agencies and individuals; **participates in national and international efforts** to standardize health-related information; **represents public health interests** in standards development organizations, data content committees, and standards harmonization entities; and **educates** the public health community about health information technology 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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