



HIE Topic Series ~ July 2009

Topic: Sub-Network Organization or SNO

Question: *What is the relationship of Sub-Network Organizations or SNOs to Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) and Regional Health Information Organizations (RHIOs)?*

The term “**Sub-Network Organization**” or “**SNO**” was first coined by Markle Connecting for Health in its “Common Framework,” published in 2006. (See <http://www.connectingforhealth.org/phti/>)

The definition supplied in the Common Framework is as follows:

Sub-Network Organization (SNO): A Sub-Network Organization is a business structure comprised of entities that agree to share personal health information in accordance with a minimum set of technical and policy requirements embodied in the Common Framework. An SNO may be organized on a geographic basis (i.e., a RHIO) or in support of other business relationships that are not determined by location. For instance, the Veterans Administration (VA) has a network of hospitals and clinics that exchange health information on a nationwide level. Both RHIOs and non-regional networks like the VA would be sub-networks of the NHIN [Nationwide Health Information Network]. Thus, we prefer the term "SNO" because it is a more inclusive term than RHIO.

The term “SNO” is often used interchangeably with the terms Health Information Exchange (HIE), Health Information Organization (HIO) and Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO); however:

- (i) HIE more accurately refers to the technology that facilitates the exchange of patient-specific electronic health information or the system of agreed upon technical standards and policies that enable such exchange;
- (ii) HIO typically refers to the entity that operates an HIE, either as a single purpose entity or as a diverse organization with HIE functionality; and
- (iii) RHIO refers either to an HIE operated on a regional basis or an HIO serving a particular region.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), “The Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN) is being developed to provide a secure, nationwide, interoperable health information infrastructure that will connect providers, consumers, and others involved in supporting health and healthcare.” (See <http://healthit.hhs.gov/portal/server.pt> and links to “Nationwide Health Information Network”)

The NHIN is termed by HHS as a “network of networks,” that is, the NHIN will provide a nationwide network of local, regional and nationwide HIEs operated by HIOs, which when connected through the NHIN could also be described as Sub-Network Organizations or SNOs, thus constituting a “network of SNOs.”



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Additional Resources:

If you have any inquiries or want to learn more about the electronic health information exchange and HIMSS activities with HIE, please contact the Healthcare Information Management and Systems Society (HIMSS) today! Following are some additional resources on HIEs and RHIOs:

- *HIMSS HIELights* Electronic Newsletter Information ***Subscribe today!***
- http://www.himss.org/ASP/topics_FocusDynamic.asp?faid=156
- HIMSS HIE informational site http://himss.org/ASP/topics_rhio.asp
- HIMSS HIE Tools and Resources site http://www.himss.org/ASP/topics_FocusDynamic.asp?faid=141
- HIMSS Advocacy site (including healthcare reform, Economic Stimulus, HITECH information) <http://www.himss.org/advocacy/>

Credits:

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