



**Health Information Technology**  
**Policy Guidance for State-level Decision-makers**

May 23, 2011

**I. Purpose**

This State Health Information Technology (health IT) Policy Guidance document serves as a reference for state legislators and executives for how health IT might be used in the development of state health IT policy, executive orders and legislation. Whether newly elected or experienced, as legislators, you all grapple with how to best enact policies that promote quality healthcare delivery for your constituents. The goal of delivering highly effective and quality healthcare is supported by streamlining the care delivery process and leveraging health IT. With the current healthcare landscape in transition and as healthcare delivery varies in each state, this State health IT Policy Guidance document is a valuable resource focused on key topics, issues and concepts on the adoption, deployment and utilization of health IT.

While this document does not prescribe exact methods to implement and support health IT, it does provide key information for state officials on widely accepted concepts in the current health IT arena. Whether through the development and/or operation of health information exchanges (HIEs), Regional Extension Centers (RECs), reimbursement structures for health IT, electronic health record (EHR) adoption and implementation, or telehealth, health IT activities underway within states are affecting healthcare delivery and patient safety and care quality outcomes throughout the United States. When developing health IT policy, state legislators and executives should appropriately address support of currently available funding, consumer engagement, privacy and security, and the role of the publicly-funded health programs and other policy issues affecting the deployment and use of health IT. State health IT policy should be aligned with federal health IT initiatives, policy, regulations and compliance efforts to share the common goal of transforming healthcare in our nation by harnessing the potential of information technology and applying it in a uniform manner.

Note that the State health IT Policy Guidance document reflects the [HIMSS 2011-2012 Public Policy Principles](#). Please refer to these principles for direction and definition from the federal government on health IT.

**II. State Health IT Policy Guidance for Protecting and Supporting Funding and Incentives**

The 2011-2012 HIMSS Public Policy Principles provide the basis for many of the policy and funding issues going forward in the states. Furthermore, the basis for developing many of these funding principles arose from The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). ARRA included billions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments for the "meaningful use" of certified EHR technology and will help to close the health IT adoption gap in the United States. In addition, ARRA provides funding to states for the development of statewide health information exchanges which are a key component encouraging EHR adoption by providing information sharing to support effective healthcare delivery and increased patient care quality outcomes. HIMSS agrees with Dr. David Blumenthal, former National Coordinator for Health IT that "these are historic times".

ARRA is bringing the power of EHRs into the hands of healthcare providers at the point of patient care delivery. However, these new initiatives should not create a new form of "digital divide." Our goal is to ensure that all constituencies benefit from these efforts and that healthcare is provided in an effective and efficient manner across all patient care settings.

Each state has the capability to protect funding and prioritize their dollars to ensure that money is put to best use, which includes supporting the betterment of healthcare. ARRA committed unprecedented public funding with the intention of stimulating the economy through methodical purchase, implementation and use of EHRs. Focus is now directed on the administration of these funds in an efficient and effective and transparent manner, and development of initiatives to assure the durability of these investments over time. In addition, clinician reimbursement methodologies must appropriately reflect the evolving use of health IT over time.

**III. State Health IT Policy Guidance for Supporting Consumer Engagement**

State health IT policy can encourage, facilitate, and drive consumer engagement so that consumers have access to information and become active participants in their healthcare decisions. Consumer engagement can increase effective patient/provider communications, lead to reduction of medical errors, increase patient safety, and facilitate improvements in public and population healthcare. In today's electronic environment, various health IT applications, such as personal health records (PHRs) and EHRs, serve as tools for consumers to manage their personal health information and lifestyles, bolstered by the widespread use of mobile technology and social media. These new technologies facilitate increased consumer awareness and engagement with their providers that facilitates and aids privacy decisions and management of advance directives. The overall effect of consumer engagement is anticipated to result in transparency of price, cost and quality; foster trust and collaboration among stakeholders; and positively impact the health and quality of life for all individuals residing in the U.S.

#### **IV. State Health IT Policy Guidance for Privacy and Security**

The privacy and security of protected health information is best achieved when state health IT policy aligns with related federal and state privacy laws and regulations as designated by HIPPA. Consumers and their authorized providers should have access to PHI in a timely, private and secure manner, as protected by law.

HIMSS continues its 10 year history of producing privacy and security tools that have helped shape the discussion and prepare the healthcare community for regulatory compliance and today's most pressing security implementation challenges. Featured tools include the [HIMSS Privacy and Security Toolkit](#) and the recently released [HIMSS Privacy and Security Toolkit for Small Provider Organizations](#), published in partnership with the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA).

For additional information on HIMSS' privacy and security activities, please contact Lisa A. Gallagher, HIMSS Senior Director of Privacy and Security at [lgallagher@himss.org](mailto:lgallagher@himss.org).

#### **V. State Health IT Policy Guidance for the Role of Publicly Funded Health Programs**

States have the ability to directly affect and participate in health IT initiatives through select publicly funded health programs such as Medicaid, public health initiatives, and State Employee Health Benefits programs. As payers, providers and regulators of these programs, states can leverage their role to not only provide grants, loans and tax incentives to support health IT initiatives, but also require the use of select health IT strategies and applications, and adherence to nationally recognized health IT standards and interoperability frameworks.

Additionally, states can support federal, state and private programs that assist providers with health IT implementation and support programs such as Regional Extension Centers (REC). The RECs focus on training the workforce to support the selection, implementation and management of EHRs to improve quality, safety and health outcomes and encourage scholarships matching grant funding and loan repayment programs to support this effort.

States can also expand or establish new workforce development and training programs that not only provide resources to support health IT curricula, but require the programs to engage in "pipeline" channels (e.g., technically focused middle/high schools, community colleges, AmeriCorps, veterans' employment and training programs). These programs support informatics competencies, particularly in underserved communities, through which potential skilled workers can be identified, engage in internships, be recruited and prepare for health IT related careers.

## **VI. HIMSS Government Relations and Regional Affairs**

Developed by HIMSS, the State health IT Policy Guidance is an excellent resource for state executives and legislators when developing health IT policy. HIMSS is a cause-based, not-for-profit organization exclusively focused on providing global leadership for the optimal use of health IT and management systems for the betterment of healthcare. Founded 50 years ago, HIMSS and its related organizations have offices in Chicago, Washington, DC, Brussels, Singapore, Leipzig, and other locations across the United States. HIMSS represents more than 35,000 individual members, of which more than two thirds work in healthcare provider, governmental and not-for-profit organizations. HIMSS also includes over 520 corporate members and more than 120 not-for-profit organizations that share our mission of transforming healthcare through the effective use of information technology and management systems. HIMSS frames and leads healthcare practices and public policy through health ITs content expertise, professional development, and research initiatives designed to promote information and management systems' contributions to improving the quality, safety, access and cost-effectiveness of patient care.

In developing and supporting state health IT policy, HIMSS is a resource for analytical and public policy expertise. [HIMSS Analytics](#), a subsidiary of HIMSS, is a valuable resource for health IT data and analytic needs. HIMSS Analytics supports HEALTH IT decision making by collecting and analyzing healthcare organization data relating to IT processes, environments, products, information systems department management, healthcare delivery trends and purchasing- related decisions.

HIMSS serves as an instrumental component in developing and supporting state health IT policy on the local level. Our members and staff help educate federal and state officials with the health IT knowledge and resources needed to develop and implement appropriate health IT- related policy. State officials can request legislative analyses, forecasting and health IT-specific information through HIMSS. Such activities are conducted in conjunction with the appropriate HIMSS committees and roundtables. On the local level, state officials have the opportunity to collaborate with 50 U.S.-based [HIMSS Chapters](#) on health IT initiatives. If a state official is not already a HIMSS State Government Member, he or she can reach out to a local HIMSS Chapter to connect with health IT experts. Facilitated by HIMSS Chapters, and supported by HIMSS, [State Advocacy Days](#) are the most prominent advocacy activities at the local level. During State Advocacy Days, HIMSS members and other health IT stakeholders have an opportunity to participate in health IT education, as well as visit and educate state legislators on health IT policy. Additional [advocacy and public policy activities](#) among HIMSS Chapters include monitoring state health IT legislative activities and fostering relationships with industry experts and state officials.

For additional information on HIMSS and our State Health IT Policy Guidance, please call Thomas S. Keefe, Senior Director of HIMSS State Government Affairs at (703) 562 – 8813 or [tkeefe@himss.org](mailto:tkeefe@himss.org).