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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The HIMSS RHIO Federation/Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the HIMSS RHIO Federation?

A. The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) founded the HIMSS RHIO Federation to connect, provide advocacy support, and educate organizations involved in Regional Health Information Organizations (RHIOs) and Health Information Exchanges (HIEs).

The RHIO Federation is based on current HIMSS initiatives, such as Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE), that support the implementation of interoperable electronic health records (EHRs) and will be part of the proposed National Health Information Network (NHIN).

Q. When was the HIMSS RHIO Federation introduced?

A. HIMSS announced the RHIO Federation at the HIMSS Public Policy Forum in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 21.

Q. What is the goal of the Federation?

A. The goal of the HIMSS RHIO Federation is to provide the tools, best practices, education and networking necessary to foster the development of these regional efforts.

Q. What is the Federation’s definition of a Regional Health Information Organization – the RHIO?

A. A RHIO, as defined in the HIMSS RHIO Federation’s business plan, is a group of organizations with a business stake in improving the quality, safety and efficiency of care delivery. The purpose of a RHIO is to electronically exchange health information in a secure format so that the receiver can use the information. The terms “RHIO” and “Health Information Exchange,” or “HIE,” are often used interchangeably.

Q. How will the HIMSS RHIO Federation benefit those organizations that join?

A. The HIMSS RHIO Federation offers numerous benefits to members. These include:

The HIMSS RHIO Federation – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- **HIMSS National Network:** The RHIO Federation will provide local and national support through the national network of 45 HIMSS chapters, approximately 17,000 HIMSS individual members and more than 275 HIMSS corporate members. Each of the 45 HIMSS chapters will identify a RHIO Federation Chapter Liaison, who will participate in local RHIO/HIE activities.
- **RHIO Industry Briefs:** The RHIO Federation will update the healthcare industry on current topics and strategies related to the development and maintenance of RHIOs and HIEs.
- **Educational & Outreach Programs:** The RHIO Federation will offer educational programs and materials on how RHIOs and HIEs can be successfully developed and managed. The Federation will focus on three main topics: chain of trust, business rules and harmonization. Other topics will be supported as demanded by the industry.
- **RHIO Advocacy:** The RHIO Federation will explain and provide a context for federal, state and local government initiatives that impact RHIOs and HIEs by providing a collective industry voice in the development of legislation, a presence on Capitol Hill for its members, and collaborative efforts at the state and local levels through its chapter program.
- **RHIO Inventory:** The RHIO Federation will track RHIO and HIE initiatives throughout the country and provide updates on a quarterly basis through case studies, technology reviews, best practices and return-on-investment reports.
- **RHIO Federation Tools:** The HIMSS RHIO Federation will undertake several projects designed to provide real-world tools for RHIO professionals. Topics include security, operating rules, best practices and HIPAA compliance.

Q. Who can join the HIMSS RHIO Federation?

A. The RHIO Federation is provided free of charge to verified RHIO or HIE organizations at any level of development. Current HIMSS corporate and individual members can participate as part of their membership.

Q. Do organizations have to pay to join the HIMSS RHIO Federation?

A. There is no charge to join the HIMSS RHIO Federation.

Q. Do organizations or individuals have to be a HIMSS member to join?

A. Yes, HIMSS membership is a requirement to join the HIMSS RHIO Federation.

Q. How is the HIMSS RHIO Federation funded?

A. The RHIO Federation is funded by HIMSS and is provided as a new benefit to HIMSS members.

Q. What is the long-range plan for the HIMSS RHIO Federation?

A. During the next three years through June 2008, the focus of the HIMSS RHIO Federation will be on three key areas:

1. **Business Rules** refers to the processes by which the organizations involved in a RHIO conduct business. Processes such as the legal agreements to share data, operating rules, governance, financial structure and incorporation model (LLC, non-profit, S-Corp, C-Corp, etc.)
2. **Harmonization** refers to the establishment of accepted methods for executing daily business process for sharing data, work flow management and other activities. RHIOs will need to standardize both the business and technical aspects of their operation.
3. **Chain of Trust** refers to the establishment of trust relationships between stakeholders in a RHIO and one RHIO to another. The notion of sharing information between health care providers, for the most part, is new. All stakeholders in a RHIO will need to know that they can trust others in the RHIO to protect data. Through business and legal agreements, plus technologies supporting authentication and authorization, both inter- and intra-RHIO data sharing will become a mainstream activity.

Within these areas HIMSS will develop definitions, position statements, advocacy initiatives, white papers and other deliverables to support the industry at large.

Q. Who should I contact for more information?

A. To join the HIMSS RHIO Federation, or for more information, contact David Clark, HIMSS director of integration and interoperability, at dclark@himss.org or at 703.837.9816.

“...The development, implementation and application of secure health information exchange across care settings require a local leadership, oversight, fiduciary responsibility and governance. These regional health information organizations are critical to health information exchange that reflects the health care priorities of a local area as well as the legitimacy and trustworthiness of this activity to clinicians and consumers...”

July 2004, *The Decade of Health Information Technology: Framework for Strategic Action*, Department of Health and Human Services

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