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AHCA Announces Passage of Florida Health Information Exchange Legislation

TALLAHASSEE - The Agency for Health Care Administration (Agency) announced the passage of legislation to facilitate the electronic sharing of health information and improve patients' access to their personal health information.

The Agency crafted the legislation based on its work with the federal Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (HISPC) project and drafted it to enable patients and their providers to have faster and more cost-effective access to medical information for informed treatment decisions while establishing meaningful safeguards for protecting the privacy of patients' information.

"Patients and providers want better-coordinated health care because they know it results in better outcomes at lower costs," Secretary Holly Benson said. "By establishing standards for the sharing of data that protect patients' privacy, we have positioned Florida at the forefront of meaningful electronic health information exchange efforts."

Senator Jeremy Ring and Representative Denise Grimsley introduced the legislation in the 2009 legislative session. The following provisions are included:

- A section of law is created that specifically addresses electronic health records in health care. It includes definitions for many health information technologies including qualified electronic health record and certified electronic health record technology as defined the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
- Standards are established for releasing health information in either paper or electronic formats during an emergency.
- The Agency is directed to develop a universal patient authorization form in paper and electronic format which must be accepted if completed and submitted in accordance with Agency instructions. Immunity from liability is provided for the health care provider releasing an identifiable health record when relying on the information contained in the authorization form.

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- Hospitals and labs are authorized to exchange data with health care practitioners and providers involved in the care or treatment of the patient.
- The Agency is given a framework in which to create a certified electronic health records technology loan fund for health care providers to encourage faster adoption in medical settings. The Agency is also authorized to pursue health information technology grants associated with The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund such a provider loan program.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. AHCA administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 32,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and promotes the exchange of and publishes health care information and statistics. For more information, please visit <http://ahca.myflorida.com>.

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