



THE FLORIDA OFFICE OF Economic Recovery



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Governor Crist Designates Lead Planning Team for Stimulus-Funded Health Information Initiatives

*~ Agency for Health Care Administration,
Health Information Exchange Coordinating Council to lead efforts ~*

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TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced that he has designated the Agency for Health Care Administration, with the advice of the Health Information Exchange Coordinating Committee (HIECC), as the entity to lead Florida's efforts to draw down stimulus dollars for health information initiatives.

"In regards to federal recovery dollars, Florida has met every deadline and request for information in order to ensure that Florida receives all funds available to help our economy and our people," Governor Crist said. "As a leader in the information technology field, Florida is well-equipped to also be a leader in health information initiatives."

Under the federal stimulus plan, a state or a qualified state-designated entity must consult with stakeholders and apply for federal planning and/or implementation grants to promote health information technology in the state.

The Agency, with the advice of the HIECC, currently promotes and develops health information initiatives, and it will now expand its role to take advantage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Act). The Act provides states with federal stimulus funding to help support hospitals, physicians and other health care providers in their efforts to adopt electronic health records to improve access to medical information at the point of care. It includes monetary incentives for providers and authorizes federal grants to states for the planning and implementation of electronic health information exchange. The Agency, with the advice of the HIECC, will perform a critical role to coordinate health information exchange planning and implementation efforts in Florida.

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“We can improve health care by giving providers and patients access to health care information at the point of care,” said Holly Benson, Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration. “This Agency with the help of the committee have already put Florida ahead of other states, and in this new role, Florida will be well-positioned to take advantage of stimulus dollars.”

AHCA’s Secretary chairs the committee which includes representatives of health care providers and organizations, health plans, consumers, health information organizations, information technology development organizations, Florida medical schools, and the Florida Department of Health. Members have expertise in state and national developments related to health information exchange, certification standards for electronic health records, including privacy and security safeguards, and the clinical information requirements of health care practitioners.

The first task of the HIECC will be to develop a Florida Health Information Exchange Plan (Florida HIE Plan) for submission to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. The Florida HIE Plan will describe goals and objectives for electronic health information exchange in Florida building on current activities in operation or under development, propose use of funding to achieve each objective, and establish accountability criteria for the use of funds. The plan will also address coordination with related economic stimulus funded programs including broadband infrastructure access to health care providers, and regional extension centers providing technical assistance in the implementation of electronic health records.

The Florida HIE plan will be developed through a series of public meetings. More information on the HIECC is available at www.FHIN.net. Members, notices and meeting materials are posted at this site.

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>.

The federal stimulus funding is subject to appropriation by the Florida Legislature, and Governor Crist looks forward to working with the Legislature to obtain approval, when necessary. For more information about Florida’s use of the federal recovery dollars made available through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, please visit www.FlaRecovery.com.

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