AIRA
AMERICAN IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY ASSOCIATION

Immunization information systems for a new era

SnapShots

IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY NEWS *from* AMERICAN IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY ASSSOCIATION (AIRA)

Welcome to *SnapShots,* the American Immunization Registry Association's newsletter about the progress, best practices, and accomplishments of immunization information systems across the country.

We invite you to share news about your registry. Email us at aira@immregistries.org or call us at 202-527-7000 with information about a successful programmatic or technical innovation, major accomplishment, or milestone that your registry has reached. *SnapShots* is sent to subscribers quarterly and posted on AIRA's web site: www.immregistries.org.

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SnapShots is produced quarterly by the AIRA Education Committee. Editor: **Katie Reed, NY.**

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would be remiss in this report if I did not extend a most heartfelt, "Thank You!" to Sherry Riddick, who served as acting president for an additional nine months when Anne Cordon left the IIS arena, an "act" which extended her role above and beyond what was expected. Under Sherry's guidance, we compiled an application for the cooperative agreement with the CDC that was not only accepted but lauded for being one of our best applications!

The more things stay the same, the more they change… Sherry will continue in her leadership role as immediate past president; you will hear more from me in my new role as president; and we have several board members that are continuing their tenure. This consistency bodes well for everything that is happening, which is a lot! We have a new executive director, Rebecca Coyle, and you can learn more about her in the interview in this issue. Three new board members have been elected, and we are undertaking a new management approach by hiring Hauck & Associates to assist in the administrative management of AIRA.

The more things change… Here is just a sample of what is changing and what IIS must be prepared for: Meaningful Use! How are IIS prepared for Stage I and Stage II? What do we need to do? What about EHR and IIS interoperability? How about that new version of HL7? Vaccine ordering, VTrckS and ExIS!

We at AIRA are committed to helping IIS managers, immunization program managers and staff get answers to these questions, to understand what the issues and options are, and to help IIS be prepared for the changes ahead.

We will meet these changes and challenges by thinking creatively, working together, and finding solutions where others cannot. It is what IIS do best! ∎

— Submitted by Emily Emerson (IIS Manager, MN), AIRA President

Interview with Rebecca Coyle, AIRA's New Executive Director

Rebecca Coyle has worked within the Immunization world for the past 9 years. She has had the opportunity to work in a variety of capacities and in multiple states. She started in Idaho primarily educating school and childcare personnel about immunization requirements and conducting AFIX (Assessment, Feedback, Incentive, eXchange) visits with the Vaccines For Children providers. Rebecca then moved to CDC as a Public Health Advisor for the Immunization Program in the state of Minnesota where she worked in a variety of areas. Most recently she returned to the Idaho immunization program as the Program Manager for the past three and one-half years. Much of her focus as Program Manager was on efforts to stabilize vaccine funding, increase provider trainings, and move the Idaho IIS from "opt in" to "opt out". She worked closely with policy experts and legislators to effect these changes.

Rebecca has seen an IIS in action and understands the importance of adapting the IIS throughout the program. She saw the Idaho IIS evolve from just an immunization collection tool to an Immunization Information System that is the backbone of the entire

program. The program now uses the IIS to conduct VFC & AFIX visits, providers order and account for their vaccines, schools complete their annual report and health departments conduct daycare inspections, all using the IIS .

Thoughts About AIRA Today

When I caught Rebecca she had been with AIRA for about 6 weeks. She is on the "absorbing everything" track as she works with the AIRA board and partners to get a comprehensive view of all that AIRA does for the IIS community. She feels as if she has a solid understanding of the programmatic side and how AIRA can help facilitate the integration of the IIS into an Immunization Program. Meanwhile she is bringing herself up to speed on the issues related to the technical aspects of an IIS. Fortunately there are a lot of very knowledgeable resources in AIRA that she has been working with to get caught up.

Rebecca has been spending a lot of her time focusing on the new cooperation agreement. As she stated "this is a great foundation and road map for AIRA as it evolves into the new management and leadership structure". She is developing an evaluation plan to help operationalize the road map for AIRA that can in turn be the basis for evaluation of AIRA's success. She is also working with the committees to update and develop charters and working with the Board to establish administrative procedures that streamline the day-to-day operations.

One area Rebecca has said she really wants to focus on is the desire to engage the general membership in all that AIRA is doing. To accomplish this, she will be sending out a monthly update to the membership highlighting what occurred during the prior month, interesting information, and notice of upcoming events. She also plans to talk with new IIS Managers and introduce them to the role that AIRA plays and connect them into the broader IIS community.

Other activities people will be seeing is updating the general membership list to ensure that AIRA has the most recent and best contact information an updating the web site.

Thoughts About AIRA's Future

Rebecca feels her past experience has prepared her for her role as Executive Director. She sees the IIS world evolving as more and more states integrate their IIS throughout the immunization program. In many ways her work with the Idaho IIS was a microcosm of what she sees happening at the national level. Additionally having been an AIM member and AIM board member Rebecca sees the critical need for making IIS a part of the Program Managers day to day world. IIS brings value to immunization programs and decision makers should understand exactly what is available to them. She sees that with the roll out of meaningful use and the engagement of electronic health record (EHR) systems it is imperative that the IIS community and Program Managers are engaged to guarantee the role of public health in the new topography. "There is a wealth of knowledge within our membership and AIRA can capitalize on that to help drive policy at the national level."

She also believes sustainability is going to be a critical function of IIS leadership activities and AIRA should work with members to share ways others are making their IIS sustainable.

Finally, she sees the need to continue to support areas of core AIRA strengths. AIRA's role in educating the membership, bringing best practices and examples of success forward has always been a priority and continues to be one. As part of this she wants to make sure that all new IIS managers are aware that they have a network of support and know that AIRA is a key resource.

Goals and Objectives as Executive Director

Rebecca's initial focus is getting AIRA on track with the new cooperative agreement, new leadership and new management structure and increasing communication with the members. Additionally she is looking forward to meeting the membership and partners in the IIS world. Please seek her out at the upcoming conferences as she is really excited about getting to know the AIRA community better.
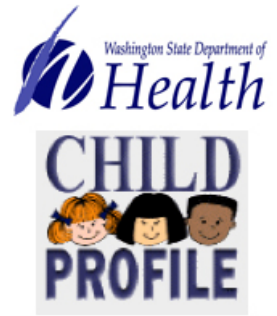
Hauck and Associates

AIRA is now managed by an association management company – Hauck and Associates. Association management companies are professional service firms that provide executive, administrative, and financial management; membership development; meetings management; and marketing and communication services. Jennifer Bank is the Administrative Assistant for AIRA. She is located at the Hauck office in Washington, D.C., which functions as AIRA headquarters. Jen has a degree in Communications from the University of Delaware and has been with Hauck & Associates for more than two years. Jen is the "voice" of AIRA as she answers the phone calls from members and others; she also sends out AIRA e-mails to members and will assist the Board and the Executive Director with other administrative duties. ■

— *Source: Katie Reed, HP*

Online Dating: Registries and VTrckS

Washington and Michigan are pioneering the interface between VTrckS, the new CDC vaccine management system, and ExIS or "External Information Systems." Michigan and Washington have Immunization Information Systems (IIS) created and supported by different vendors. Although the systems are different, both have been configured to successfully interface with VTrckS and both have been successful with the VTrckS match. At the end of the day, vaccine orders are being successfully placed and processed through the VTrckS / IIS connection. The success of both IIS pilots is a strong indicator that other states with an IIS or external information systems will successfully use VTrckS. The key to that success was careful preparation on the part of program and IIS teams and the receptiveness of the CDC and SAP staff prior to going live with VTrckS. Listed below are some steps Washington took in the planning stages that helped assure success with our transition. These steps may help with planning for your VTrckS transition.

- **Prepare yourselves for change:** Recognize what won't change – for us that meant none of our front end provider ordering processes would change. We use the registry the same way we always have to review and approve provider orders. We identified what would change and focused efforts on addressing the areas that would change.

- **Connect with your IIS vendor or your in-house programmers early:** Our close working relationship with our registry vendor, Scientific Technologies Corporation, allowed us to quickly get file specifications in the registry in order, identify needed workarounds and plan enhancements.

- **Carefully review the file specifications:** Three files can be exported from your IIS or ExIS and VTrckS: Provider Master Data, Provider Inventory, and Provider Order File. The VTrckS Shipping File is intended to be imported to your IIS. You can find the specifications on the CDC VTrckS website.
  - Cross walk these files with what is available in or currently exported or imported from your IIS.
  - Check that the field alignment, size and type match with the VTrckS specification.
  - Initiate file layout and export type changes in your IIS to assure compatibility.
  - Identify and document workarounds if they will be needed.

- **Map your new IIS / VTrckS business process:** Document the step by step process from provider order being input in the IIS through file import and confirmation in VTrckS.

- **Walk through each step in the process:** Everyone should practice, know and be comfortable with the steps in the process. Be clear about which steps are completed in your IIS, and which will be completed in VTrckS. Practice any needed workarounds.

- **Get familiar with VTrckS:** Start with the parts of the application needed for your daily processes. Then explore other VTrckS functionality. The VTrckS website has tutorials and demonstrations on a number of VTrckS processes. Visit the website now to start getting familiar with it. Every grantee should have received a CD with the training materials.

- **Personalize your home page:** Once you get VTrckS loaded on your system, personalize your home page. This lets you quickly navigate VTrckS to complete tasks that are routine parts of your work. An example is setting up and displaying searches for orders that have various statuses (approved, rejected, complete etc.).

- **Over communicate:** When we implemented VTrckS we connected anytime an issue or question arose. We initiated daily vaccine management triage meetings for the first week. At the one month mark, we communicate occasionally as needed.

There are many different IIS products in use across the nation. Some are supported internally, and others have vendor support. The basic steps and requirements to interface with VTrckS have been clearly articulated and should be able to be met by all systems. Depending on your ExIS, you may need to make some adjustments to your system or your business processes to accomplish vaccine ordering using your ExIS and VTrckS. You may have to implement some workarounds or complete some of the process using the registry and others in VTrckS. Washington currently uses both. We have a workaround for importing inventory while we wait for a patch to our registry to fix a bug. We use VTrckS to review and update provider demographics prior to importing the order and inventory data. We've simply incorporated these steps into our business processes and it is working for us. We continue to work with our other pilot partners – Michigan, an IIS state, Chicago and Colorado, non-IIS states, the CDC and SAP to troubleshoot the VTrckS system and suggest improvements. The focus now is identifying and fixing bugs and defects in VTrckS – much like it is whenever we get new functionality in our own IIS. The CDC and SAP teams are listening to our input, and working hard to help make sure the system works for all of us. I am very encouraged by the relationship between our registry and VTrckS. It may end up being one of those on-line matches made in heaven after all. ■

— Source: Jan Hicks-Thomson, Vaccine and IP Registry Integration Unit Manager, WA

> **The success of both IIS pilots is a strong indicator that other states with an IIS or external information systems will successfully use VTrckS.**

Michigan VTrckS Pilot

Michigan is thrilled to have made the decision to use the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR) for the VTrckS roll-out. Participating in the Pilot Project has been a great deal of work for not only our programmers but also the VFC support staff, MCIR Staff and local health department staff. However on our Go-Live date we saw the pay off for all our hard work.

Initial orders were submitted in a test system from MCIR to VTrckS. This provided useful feedback and allowed us to address any issues prior to the Go-Live date. We are now utilizing our IIS solely for provider orders which are transmitted to VTrckS without issues. Our providers are not using the VTrckS system at all. Michigan is learning more about the functions in VTrckS as the pilot continues and we hope through our feedback provided to CDC will bring additional enhancements to the VTrckS system that will support additional IIS use. ■

— Source: Beatrice Salada, MCIR Coordinator and Terry Adams VFC Coordinator, MI

2010 Program Managers Meeting

The Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) jointly held their annual Program Managers Meeting on November 15–18, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. Presentations by speakers from AIM and CDC, and invited guests, are available at http://www.immunizationmanagers.org/membership/PMM2010.phtml/. Of particular interest to the Immunization Information System (IIS) community will be the presentations by Jessica Kahn from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Gary Urquhart on interoperability of electronic health records (EHR-s) with IIS and meaningful use. Dr. Lance Rodewald's presentation is also of interest for CDC initiatives that involve IIS.

Highlights of the meeting for IIS were:

- **Task Force on Community Preventive Services recommends IIS** – The Task Force completed its review in July 2010 and issued its recommendations of IIS on the basis of strong evidence of effectiveness in increasing vaccination rates. See details at: http://thecommunityguide.org/vaccines/universally/imminfosystems.html/
- **Meaningful Use** – Health care providers will soon be eligible for enhanced payments from Medicare or Medicaid by demonstrating meaningful use of certified EHR-s. Submitting data to an IIS, using HL7 2.3.1 or 2.5.1, is one criterion for achieving meaningful use. Medicaid providers will need to adopt certified EHR-s in 2011 and demonstrate meaningful use in 2012. Medicare providers need to demonstrate meaningful use between January and March 2011, with attestation in April 2011. IIS may apply for funding from CMS to support meaningful use testing.
- **Increased vaccine administration fees** – The ACA includes federal funding to cover increasing Medicaid/Vaccines for Children (VFC) program vaccine administration fees to the Medicare level of ~ $20 in 2013 and 2014. After these two years, states will need to cover the costs. IIS should be used to track expected improvements in immunization rates and provide data to support sustained enhanced vaccine administration fees. In 2010 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) prioritized participation in IIS to improve immunization infrastructure, including increasing vaccine accountability and supporting enhanced vaccine administration fees.
- **VFC program dose-level accountability** – Vaccine dose-level accountability will be essential for long-term viability of the VFC program. IIS should be leveraged to facilitate VFC accountability as well as accountability for vaccines purchased with 317 funds and other public funding sources.
- **Discussions were begun** about a vision for data flow from a 2-dimensional bar code reader on vaccine vials to EHR-s to IIS to VTrckS to support VFC vaccine ordering, management, and accountability. ■

— Source: Amy Metroka, NYC and Amanda Bryant, CDC

CDC's Enhancing the Interoperability of Electronic Health Records (EHR) and Immunization Information Systems (IIS) Cooperative Agreement

In late 2010, funds were awarded to seventeen state and three city 317 Immunization Program grantees through a competitive process for a two-year CDC cooperative agreement, "Enhancing the Interoperability of Electronic Health Records (EHR) and Immunization Information Systems (IIS)". These cooperative agreement activities are funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, which includes the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act. The ARRA and HITECH initiatives promote the advancement of the appropriate use of health information technology to improve quality of care, a goal shared by all IIS.

The purpose of the EHR-IIS interoperability cooperative agreement is to support the enhanced interoperability of EHRs and IIS with a specific focus on the exchange of vaccination records using Health Level 7 (HL7) national standards and reducing the duplicate data entry burden on providers. Over the two-year project period which began September 1, 2010, EHR-IIS Interoperability grantees will be working to achieve several measurable outcomes under this cooperative agreement:

1. Increase the number of enhanced EHR–IIS practice-based electronic interfaces available by 45%;
2. Increase the number of practice-based electronic immunization transactions reported/timeframe (week, month) to the IIS by 10% and
3. Increase the number/proportion of practice-based immunization data received and recorded in an IIS within 30 days or less by 25%.

CDC's IIS Support Branch activities for this cooperative agreement include providing program expertise and guidance and monitoring project planning, implementation, and evaluation. In addition, two Expert Panels with key stakeholder membership will be assembled. One will be focused on gathering and developing best practices and guidance for EHR-IIS Interoperability grantees including transport layer recommendations, HL7 Implementation Guide assistance, and client-level de-duplication guidance. The second will focus on creating guidance logic and documentation for clinical decision support. The first focus area associated with the EHR-IIS Interoperability cooperative agreement, the Transport Layer, kicked off via Live Meeting on January 24, 2011. A three day face-to-face meeting will take place in Atlanta from March 8 through March 10, 2011. This group will develop transport layer recommendations, guidelines, and templates for supporting IIS in facilitating EHR interoperability. While these activities are associated with the EHR-IIS Interoperability cooperative agreement, their recommendations and products will be able to be used by all IIS grantees.

CDC's IIS Support Branch anticipates that up to 2,000 practice EHRs across the 20 EHR-IIS Interoperability grantees will receive enhanced interoperability to enable improved electronic exchange of immunization data. These enhancements may assist practices in receiving Meaningful Use incentives, and will improve IIS data quality challenges by improving the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of immunization data.

A map identifying EHR-IIS Interoperability grantees can be found in Gary Urquhart's presentation (www.immunizationmanagers.org/membership/Gary.pdf), given at the Immunization Program Manager's Meeting on November 17, 2010. The complete Funding Opportunity Announcement is available at Grants.gov at: http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppId=54435/. ■

— *Source Amanda Bryant, CDC*

In the News

ASTHO Releases Survey Results on Meaningful Use Readiness

In November, ASTHO surveyed state public health agencies on their capability to accept data from electronic health records that are certified for meaningful use. The survey found that 76% of respondents are planning to have their electronic laboratory reporting systems ready by April 2011 and 86% are planning to have their immunization registries ready by the same date. Respondents also cited the need for technical guidance and the lack of funding as barriers to readiness. The survey results can be found at http://www.astho.org/Display/AssetDisplay.aspx?id=5567. For more information, contact Jim Kirkwood at jkirkwood@astho.org. ■

PHII and Regenstrief Institute Release Joint Publication

Check out the joint publication from the Public Health Informatics Institute and Regenstrief Institute on leveraging immunization data in an era of e-health. The paper is featured on the PHII home page right now: www.phii.org. ■

AIRA Joins JPHIT as Affiliate Member

AIRA is now an affiliate member of the Joint Public Health Informatics Taskforce (JPHIT). Affiliate membership with JPHIT enables AIRA's engagement and participation in the mission of JPHIT – to continuously forge a consensus strategy and coordinated action to achieve a shared informatics framework for public health agencies and partners.

The HITECH Act of last year's ARRA legislation presented significant opportunities and challenges for public health. Coordination of strategies and activities to support this work is essential to meet national goals for a successful response to health care reform. AIRA is recognized as a key organization for JPHIT to partner with for the successful coordination of activities around public health readiness for the meaningful use program.

As an Affiliate Member, the AIRA representative may attend JPHIT meetings, provide consultation, and serve on JPHIT committees/workgroups. ■

AIRA Calendar

AIRA Webinar on IIS and Interstate Data Sharing

Save the date for **Tuesday, March 1, 2011,** from 2:00PM–3:30PM ET (11:00AM–12:30PM PT) when AIRA members will discuss Immunization Information Systems (IIS) and sharing data across state lines.

Members from Oregon and Washington will be talking about their lessons learned, policy and legal issues, implementation, technical issues and value added from their agreement and members from New York State and New York City will discuss moving towards a regional data exchange and building on the AIRA Model Inter-Organization Agreement. For more information about the webinar please visit the AIRA website at www.immregistries.org. ■

AIRA Joins the CDC's 45th National Immunization Conference (NIC)

Save the date for the CDC's NIC, to be held **March 28-31, 2011,** at the Hilton Washington in Washington, D.C.

On **March 27,** AIRA will host two **pre-conference workshops** for IIS managers and staff. The topics for this year's workshops are: Session One – "A Primer for VTrcKS, What you need to know when using an IIS"; and Session Two – "IIS Interoperability & Meaningful Use".

AIRA will be hosting a reception on Tuesday evening, **March 29.** The keynote speaker will be Jessica Kahn from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Session K-5 on **March 31** will include a presentation from AIRA titled "The American Immunization Registry Association (AIRA) – Activities and Update". ■

– More information: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/nic/