Why a National IIS Doesn't Exist

When political barriers prevented the development of a national immunization registry, independent jurisdictions were left to develop their own systems. While this was a step in the right direction, it presented limitations for interoperability since the immunization information systems (IIS) were designed to solve local challenges.

Situation: Trade-offs in Different Systems

Each jurisdiction operates an independent IIS, working under its respective state or local legislation and policy. Processes for data exchange, analysis, and reporting vary based on differing requirements, uses, and state laws that govern privacy and data sharing. Complications flow downstream to patients when these variances create gaps in immunization records. While one provider may thoroughly capture immunization information into an IIS, another provider may collect differing or limited data points, creating inconsistencies in a patient's vaccination history. Those inconsistencies present conflict when patients visit multiple providers or move from one state to another without complete records.

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Why do states have different systems?

The United States pursued a national immunization registry in 1993, but challenges arose as states presented differing needs for their individual populations. After identifying the pain points of one overarching registry, the structure evolved to support a network of systems independently governed by each jurisdiction and uniquely designed to solve local challenges.
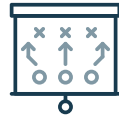
Strategy: Bridging the Gaps

Given the differences in jurisdictional laws and systems, the pursuit of universal IIS standards falls into the balance between the needs of each state versus the overarching need for a collaborative national approach. To bridge this gap, AIRA partners with jurisdictions on standards development and implementation. Measurement and Improvement is a process for measuring differences between systems and improving those systems through technical and operational support. Through this process, AIRA helps jurisdictions institute standards to bridge gaps in data collection and process, offering more streamlined data reporting at the provider and state levels.

Will a national registry be developed in the future?

For the foreseeable future IIS will remain independent systems to meet jurisdictions' unique needs. However, more progress can be made to standardize data collection and management across systems, allowing more complete, accurate vaccination records to follow a patient throughout their healthcare journey.

Solution: Working Toward Interoperability

Understanding the evolving health information technology landscape and needs for interoperability is imperative. As IIS continue to work together to standardize practices, electronic health record systems will be better able to connect with IIS to share and utilize data, ultimately improving the overall health of the population.

Learn more about AIRA's work at immregistries.org.

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