

National, Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Unifies Around Common Standard for Transport of Immunization Messages

November 23, 2020 – This month, the Immunization Integration Program (IIP) Collaborative, comprised of leaders representing clinicians, electronic health record (EHR) developers, health information exchanges (HIEs), immunization information systems (IISs), and other public health agencies, gained agreement on the unified adoption of a standard transport protocol to improve interoperability and information sharing among EHRs and IISs to support public health immunization goals.

About the Transport Standard

The transport protocol—Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) standard interface and the Web Services Definition Language—which is referenced in the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Functional Standards, v4.1](#) and is commonly referred to as the CDC WSDL, has already been adopted by [76 percent](#) of IISs across the country. The American Immunization Registry Association (AIRA) tests IIS conformance with the CDC WSDL through the [AIRA Measurement and Improvement Initiative](#) and makes aggregate results of testing publicly available through its efforts to provide IISs with information and tools to more fully align with CDC Functional Standards.

While the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) does not require EHR conformance to any transport standard within the [§170.315\(f\)\(1\) Transmission to Immunization Registries](#) requirements of the ONC Health IT Certification Program, a majority of EHRs have already voluntarily adopted the standard to facilitate effective immunization information sharing between health care provider settings and IISs.

IIP Collaborative Recommendations and Actions

The just-released IIP Collaborative report, [Improving Immunization Information Sharing through Unified Adoption of a Transport Standard](#), calls for universal adoption of the CDC WSDL among EHRs, IISs, and HIEs, and further collaboration to address other “last-mile” issues associated with immunization interoperability and information sharing. It also calls for state and local policymakers to remove jurisdictional barriers and both enable and encourage their IISs to comply with the standard transport protocol.

The report also highlights actions that the IIP will take to support adoption, including the integration of a new test within the voluntary [IIP Testing and Recognition Program](#) that will enable EHR products to demonstrate conformance with the transport protocol, as well as building awareness of the recommendations among key stakeholders through education and outreach. Finally, the report outlines a set of methods to measure both adoption and impact of the standard.

Benefits of Standardization

Variability in transport protocols used by EHRs and IISs to send and receive immunization data results in considerable burden—including increased time and cost for EHR developers, health care providers, and IISs—and negatively impacts the completeness of data for both public health and clinical decision-making.

IIP Collaborative members agree that adoption of the CDC WSDL transport capability among EHRs, HIEs, and IISs, will enable clinicians and public health agencies to have more timely access to the immunization information needed to support decision-making and immunization management, ultimately increasing vaccination coverage and reducing vaccine-preventable disease.

This action comes at an important time, given recent declines in routine immunization due to concerns about accessing non-essential medical services during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for increased vaccination due to the upcoming flu season, and expected introduction of new COVID-19 vaccines in the coming months.

About the Immunization Integration Program

The [Immunization Integration Program](#) (IIP) brings clinicians, EHR developers, HIEs, and IISs together to gain agreement on and advance the adoption of EHR capabilities and interoperability and information sharing solutions that will help assure that both clinicians and public health agencies have the information they need to increase vaccination coverage and reduce vaccine-preventable disease. Launched in 2013, the IIP is supported by the CDC, and convened through a collaboration involving Chickasaw Health Consulting (CHC), HIMSS, the American Immunization Registry Association (AIRA), and the Drummond Group.