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## Welcome to *PHINews*!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Public Health Informatics (NCPHI) welcomes you to the first issue of *PHINews*, the new Public Health Information Network (PHIN) newsletter.

What's going on with PHIN? Now you can read all about it in *PHINews*. We will publish *PHINews* on a quarterly basis to ensure that you have the latest information about NCPHI and PHIN.

Some of the topics you'll get the inside scoop on include conferences, PHIN requirements, the exhibit booth (stories from the road), feature articles on PHIN and other informatics issues, and the various speaking engagements of the PHIN folks.

We hope you enjoy *PHINews* and that you become a part of future issues.

### Remember!

As CDC's partner, **this is your newsletter**. If you have a story idea, would like to write a feature, and or have suggestions of any kind, please let us know!

[phin@cdc.gov](mailto:phin@cdc.gov)



## In and around PHIN



PHIN Headquarters

This running feature in *PHINews* provides you with an inside look at the day-to-day activities of the PHIN groups, as well as special announcements.

And as a partner organization, we'd also like to feature you, so please let us know what you are up to!

## In and around PHIN (*continued*)

### On the PHIN site

[www.cdc.gov/phn](http://www.cdc.gov/phn)

Health Information Exchange  
RFP

- PHIN will exhibit at the upcoming [Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists \(CSTE\) conference](#) in Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 24-28 2007. Stop by the PHIN exhibit booth for the latest on PHIN activities.
- [BioSense](#) initiated a series of webinars with state and local public health and hospital partners to introduce CDC's BioIntelligence Center (BIC) staff to state and local public health users. The next state webinar will occur with Georgia on June 20, 2007.
- The restructured PHIN Requirements are nearing completion. After several months of collaboration using the new [PHIN Collaborative Forum](#), the Division of Alliance Management and Consultation (DAMC) Integration and Requirements team say that partner feedback and improvements have been added, and after a few more revisions, they plan to post the final version of the PHIN Requirements (2.0) soon.
- Upcoming BioSense training and orientation sessions are scheduled for June 25, 2007. These sessions are designed for new and potential users of BioSense to discuss features and functionalities of the program.
- World Health Organization (WHO) has put forward for review and approval an official designation application to create a [WHO Collaborating Centre \(CC\)](#) for integrated surveillance and public health informatics. The application process should take about three months. This WHO CC will be anchored in the Division of Integrated Surveillance Systems and Services (DISSS), with [Dr. Scott McNabb](#) as Director.
- In partnership with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases' (NCIRD) Immunization Services Division, Division of Emergency Preparedness and Response, (DEPR) hosted a webinar to educate Public Health Project Areas on CRA's Aggregate Reporting (AR) functions, which support tracking of pandemic influenza vaccine doses administered. The PowerPoint presentation used in the webinar and a Q&A were posted on the CRA section of the PHIN Site.
- Dr. Scott McNabb was awarded a certificate of appreciation from Coordinating Office of Global Health in recognition for support and service to the effort in republics of Armenia and Georgia to develop cooperative agreements for pandemic influenza preparedness.



## PHIN Collaborative Forum *by Trudy Clower*



Have you ever wished there was a venue for sharing opinions and ideas about PHIN?

Well, that venue now exists. It's the Public Health Information Network (PHIN) Collaborative Forum, and it's a collection of on-line forums that support open dialogue on the various aspects of PHIN.

As a forum participant, you can join interactive discussions, cite challenges and barriers, obtain technical guidance and assistance, make recommendations, and contribute to decisions made about PHIN.

For example, you can:

- Discuss and review current and proposed PHIN Requirements 2.0.
- Share your views and experiences regarding PHIN applications and solutions, including CDC-developed, partner-developed, and commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software solutions.
- Look over the schedule for future PHIN partner calls; listen to audio recordings, and view PowerPoint presentations from past calls.
- Discuss the upcoming PHIN conference (August 25-27 2007) and view the most recent announcements about it.

Additionally, you have access to tools, such as informational presentations/webinars and implementation guides. You can also lead discussions and serve as an advocate for resources and promising practices both within and outside your own organization.

To access the PHIN Collaborative Workspace, go to [team.cdc.gov](http://team.cdc.gov), and enter your login ID and password. If you do not have a login ID or have forgotten yours, please send an email request to [phin@cdc.gov](mailto:phin@cdc.gov).

Once you've logged in, there are several resources to help you get started. There's a short, 12-minute orientation video, as well as several Frequently Asked Questions sheets and tutorials.

### On the PHIN Collaborative Forum

#### [Main Page](#)

*The main page of the forum. If you're not a member, email a request to [phin@cdc.gov](mailto:phin@cdc.gov).*

#### [Requirements](#)

*Ongoing discussion of the PHIN Requirements 2.0*

#### [Messaging](#)

*Forum devoted exclusively to PHIN messaging and the messaging implementation guides.*



## Laying the groundwork for a unified public health voice *by Christine Van Roosen*

### Remember these dates

- 06/05/07: Messaging guides for varicella, TB, and lead posted on the collaborative forum for review and comment.
- 06/24/07—06/28/07: PHIN workshop at [CSTE](#) and PHIN exhibit in booth #229.
- Partner calls are on the first Wednesday of each month. There will be no call in July.
- 08/27/07—08/29/07: [2007 PHIN Conference](#)

Public health organizations in the United States have successfully exchanged electronic health information for years, using information and communication systems like National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDDS), PHIN, Health Alert Network (HAN), Epidemic Information Exchange (Epi-X), and Florida's EpiCom. And formal health information exchange networks and groups have likewise developed for specific business or operational needs—like routing patients' records within “paperless” hospitals or clinics, for example, or sharing resources within regional health organizations, known as “RHIOs.”

But these finite health information-sharing groups and networks fragment health information into tiny chunks to address their own data-reporting and workflow and process needs. And they often use the same protocols, or track or report the same health information.

During the April 2007 Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) sponsored “Joint Public Health Informatics Meeting,” 80 public health partners from associations and federal agencies joined to take a look at the perplexing, multidimensional task of building a cohesive “network of networks” -- one that will enable technologically and geographically diverse clinical and public health organizations and networks to exchange information effectively nationwide.

*“ . . .the most important outcome of the meeting was the identification of key action steps. . . ”*

*Lynn Gibbs-Scharf  
Director, DAMC*

The group quickly gained traction through collaboration, according to meeting coordinator Angela Fix, director of public health informatics for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), identifying high-priority, critical issues and requirements that will lead to the development of a shared national agenda; brainstorming about actions that will address shared priority issues; and developing an action plan for implementing a shared agenda.

“This meeting brought together public health informatics thought leaders and provided a venue for them to brainstorm on issues that affect the entire public health enterprise,” says Fix. “This was a chance for everyone to hear from their colleagues on the critical issues they are facing right now and those they anticipate will be coming down the pipeline in the next five to 10 years. The group came up with several priority issues in the areas of standardization, governance across the public health enterprise, foundational issues, and operationalization of health information exchanges (HIEs) and the inclusion of public health.”

Attendee Lynn Gibbs-Scharf, director of NCPHI's Division of Alliance Management and Consultation observes that the meeting laid the



## Laying the groundwork (*continued*)

groundwork for a unified public health voice in the advancement of the electronic exchange of health data. "I think the most important outcome of the meeting was the identification of key action steps: first, the steps that will achieve short-term success and are essential to moving the national agenda forward and second, the longer-term efforts that require a coordinated response from the federal level and incorporate perspectives from all levels of public health."



Meeting members plan to convene a taskforce to address the issues raised at the meeting. The next scheduled taskforce meeting is at

the 2007 PHIN Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information on the "Joint Public Health Informatics Meeting":

- Review the meeting agenda and explore presentation links here: [http://www.astho.org/templates/display\\_pub.php?pub\\_id=2425&admin=1](http://www.astho.org/templates/display_pub.php?pub_id=2425&admin=1)
- Explore information on the national health agenda here: <http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/healthnetwork/>
- Read more about the meeting co-sponsors on their individual Web sites:
  - National Association of County & City Health Officials ([www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org))
  - Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists ([www.cste.org](http://www.cste.org))
  - Association of Public Health Laboratories ([www.aphl.org](http://www.aphl.org))
  - National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems ([www.naphsis.org](http://www.naphsis.org))
  - The National Association of Health Data Organizations ([www.nahdo.org](http://www.nahdo.org))
  - The National Association for Public Health Information Technology ([www.naphit.org](http://www.naphit.org))
  - Public Health Data Standards Consortium ([www.phdsc.org](http://www.phdsc.org))
  - Public Health Informatics Institute ([www.phii.org](http://www.phii.org))

# CDC's Tracking Program: Keeping track, promoting health

by Anne Venner and Alex Charleston

According to a 2001 report from the Public Health Foundation, chronic diseases are responsible for 70 percent of all deaths in the United States each year. The cost of care for those conditions accounts for more than 75 percent of the nation's \$1.7 trillion annual health care costs.

In 2000, the Pew Environmental Health Commission called for the creation of a coordinated public health system to prevent disease in the United States by tracking and combating environmental health threats. In response, the U.S. Congress appropriated funding to CDC in FY02. This funding enabled CDC to develop the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (referred to as Tracking Program).

CDC's Tracking Program is a multi-disciplinary collaboration that involves the ongoing collection, integration, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data from environmental hazard monitoring, human exposure surveillance, and health effects surveillance. As part of Tracking Program efforts, CDC is currently leading the initiative to build a National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network).

***... The Tracking Network will promote PHIN standards to integrate local, state, and national databases of environmental hazards, environmental exposures, and health effects. . .***

The Tracking Program, with the Tracking Network as its cornerstone, is CDC's response to calls for better understanding of how the environment can affect people's health. Although the Tracking Network is the tangible goal of this tremendous effort, the Tracking Program encompasses the people, technology, and information needed to accomplish this undertaking.

From FY02–FY06, the Tracking Program laid the foundation of the Tracking Network through grants to 24 state and local health departments to build tracking capacity and infrastructure. By the end of FY06, CDC moved from planning and capacity building to the network

implementation phase. Currently, CDC is funding 16 state and 1 city health departments to implement state-based tracking networks that will feed into the Tracking Network.

The Tracking Network will promote PHIN standards to integrate local, state, and national databases of environmental hazards, environmental exposures, and health effects. The Network will compile and provide access to nationally consistent data and measures, describe data



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## Keeping track (continued)

and provide for its discovery, allow the exchange of data, and provide data management and analysis, visualization and reporting tools. Users will be able to access and interact with the data based on a defined role. This secure role-based access will allow the public to have access to appropriate data while providing more specialized access to public health professionals.

The National Network Implementation Plan provides a comprehensive overview of the network, and its companion Technical Network Implementation Plan offers technical details for IT professionals.

For more information about this publication and CDC's Tracking Program and Network, visit: [www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking) or email [epht@cdc.gov](mailto:epht@cdc.gov).

If you would prefer *PHINews* in MS Word format, email [phin@cdc.gov](mailto:phin@cdc.gov) with your request.

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