

KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED

POSITION STATEMENT

E-HEALTH & MEDICAL RECORDS

The Kentucky Health Departments Association maintains that local health departments have a responsibility to serve the public. To serve the public in the future will require technology for paperless medical record systems and the ability to extract and share data with other medical providers, clearinghouses, third party managed care organizations and state agencies.

E-Health is widely regarded among health analysts and policy makers as critical to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of America's health care sector. E-Health consists of two parts: the adoption of health information technology (HIT), such as electronic medical records in clinical settings, and health information exchange (HIE), the ability to exchange health information electronically between two entities when appropriate. In May 2006, the KHDA IT survey identified electronic medical records as the top priority for LHDs future needs.

E-health capabilities will enable Local Health Departments to contribute and formalize data for predictive trends and concerns. It is critical that the local health department be able to effectively exchange timely data and track patient information. More private practitioners and health care providers are using electronic records and are unable to share immunization and other health information with health departments. This is a critical issue if Public Health has to deal with a communicable outbreak. With large scale outbreaks and disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, this fracture in medical information sharing may cause critical errors or delays in treatment.

Federal programs within the LHD infrastructure are enhancing their programs with partial electronic web based assessments. This splintering of medical information away from pen based record keeping only heightens the difficulties that exist within LHDs for pasting together records. The Department of Defense and VA have recently converted to EMR usage throughout all of their facilities. This accentuates the need to strategically place LHDs in the forefront to electronically link medical records and health information within the Commonwealth of KY.