

The President's Health Information Technology Plan

- To achieve his 10-year goal, the President is taking the following steps to urge coordinated public and private sector efforts that will accelerate broader adoption of health information technology:
 - **Adopting Health Information Standards.** The President called for the completion and adoption of standards that will allow medical information to be stored and shared electronically while assuring privacy and security. The necessary work is already well underway and much of it has already been completed. In the last several years, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has been collaborating with the private sector and other Federal agencies to identify and endorse voluntary standards that are necessary for health information to be shared safely and securely among health care providers. Federal agencies are accelerating their use of these standards. As part of this effort, HHS has recently negotiated and licensed a comprehensive medical vocabulary and made it available to everyone in the Nation at no cost. The results of these projects include standards for:
 - **Transmitting X-Rays Over the Internet:** Today, a patient's chest x-ray can be sent electronically from a hospital or laboratory and read by the patient's doctor in his office.
 - **Electronic Laboratory Results:** Laboratory results can be sent electronically to the physician for immediate analysis, diagnosis and treatment, and could be automatically entered into the patient's electronic health record if one existed. For example, a doctor could retrieve this information for a hospitalized patient from his office, assuring a prompt response and eliminating errors and duplicative testing due to lost laboratory reports.
 - **Electronic Prescriptions:** Patients will save time because prescriptions can be sent electronically to their pharmacists. By eliminating illegible handwritten prescriptions, and because the technology automatically checks for possible allergies and harmful drug interactions with other drugs, standardized electronic prescriptions help to avoid serious medical errors. The technology also can generate automatic approval from a health insurer.
 - **Doubling Funding to \$100 Million for Demonstration Projects on Health Care Information Technology.** To build upon the progress already made in the area of health information technology standards over the last several years, the President's proposed FY 2005 budget includes \$100 million for demonstration projects that will help us test the effectiveness of health information technology and establish best practices for more widespread adoption in the health care industry.
 - This increase builds on the President's FY 2004 budget which included \$50 million, and these new resources will support more local and regional grants so that pioneering communities, physicians, and hospitals can show that health care can be transformed by adopting and implementing health information technology.

- In April 2004, more than 600 applications for funding were received for these grants, and HHS will be awarding grants this summer, following their peer-reviewed process for selecting grantees.
- **Using the Federal Government to Foster the Adoption of Health Information Technology.** As one of the largest buyers of health care - in Medicare, Medicaid, the Community Health Centers program, the Federal Health Benefits program, Veterans medical care, and programs in the Department of Defense - the Federal Government can create incentives and opportunities for health care providers to use electronic records, much like the private sector is doing today. The President will direct these agencies to review their policies and programs and propose modifications and new actions, and to forward the recommendations to him within 90 days.
- **Creating a New, Sub-Cabinet Level Position of National Health Information Technology Coordinator.** The President announced that he is creating a new sub-Cabinet level post at HHS, to provide national leadership and coordination necessary to achieve his 10-year goal. The individual will report directly to the HHS Secretary, and will be charged by the President with:
 - Guiding ongoing work on health information standards and working to identify and implement the various steps needed to support and encourage health information technology in the public and private health care delivery systems.
 - Coordinating partnerships between government agencies and private sector stakeholders to speed the adoption of health information technology.