



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C.



February 19, 2010

M-10-10

MEMORANDUM TO: Robert M. Gates, Secretary, Department of Defense
Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
Gary Locke, Secretary, Department of Commerce
Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner, Social Security Administration
John Berry, Director, Office of Personnel Management

FROM: Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services

Peter R. Orszag, Director
Office of Management and Budget

SUBJECT: Federal Agency Coordination on Health Information Technology (HIT)

This memorandum proposes to create an interagency HIT Task Force to facilitate implementation of the President's HIT agenda through better coordination among Federal agencies involved.

Background

The President's health reform plans and the enactment of the HITECH Act as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act have created enormous opportunities to accelerate adoption and meaningful use of HIT and thereby improve the quality and efficiency of health services. However, the fragmentation of current Federal HIT responsibilities, programs and coordinating mechanisms must be overcome to execute effectively the President's program. Prior to HITECH, a mix of ad hoc councils and advisory groups were established to facilitate Federal HIT activities and communication. This legacy structure is not a good fit for the new environment that includes a statutory Office of the National Coordinator with greatly enhanced policy making responsibilities, two new Federal Advisory Committees (FACAs), increased Congressional engagement, and attention from a diverse body of interests in the private and public sectors.

We recommend dissolving and restructuring the existing HIT inter-agency groups to form a Government-wide Federal HIT Task Force. The purpose of the HIT Task Force will be to assist with policy development, coordination and implementation of Federal HIT activities, as well as to improve transparency of Federal government activities related to HIT and communication among Federal agencies as they execute Federal HIT policy.

Proposal

Our vision of the HIT Task Force is that it would be chaired by the National Coordinator for HIT (as authorized by Section 3001 of the HITECH Act). OMB's Health Program Associate Director, as well as the Federal government's Chief Information Officer and Chief Technology Officer, will be vice-chairs. Agency participants would be the senior policy officials from HHS (and its relevant offices and operating divisions), DoD, VA, SSA, USDA, OPM, and Commerce. Initially, we envision that the group will meet monthly (or bi-weekly to start).

The HIT Task Force would also have several working groups defined at the first meeting to address a variety of HIT issue areas in more detail. These areas would focus on subjects where coordination among the agencies is essential to policy implementation. For example, continued development of the Federal Health Architecture, deployment of the Beacon Community program, coordination of privacy and security standards within the Federal government and between Federal and private stakeholders, and the assurance of interoperability and health information exchange between Federal and private health care providers might all constitute useful areas for working groups to address. It is anticipated that the working groups would be open to individuals from all Federal agencies, giving them the opportunity to participate in these groups.

The purpose of limiting participation on the HIT Task Force is to provide a forum for the key agencies who are the primary producers, consumers, and implementers of HIT in the Federal government, while opening up the working groups to all Federal agencies allows for a broad participation across the government on specific HIT issues. We believe it imperative that policy and technical representation be integrated in these communities, so that the efforts of both can be fully informed and coordinated.

Once the HIT Task Force is established, issues deserving high priority include:

- Coordinating and supporting achievement of the Administration's vision for HIT, and especially, implementation and regulation on meaningful use developed pursuant to the HITECH statute.
- Providing formal Federal input into the two statutory Federal advisory committees: the HIT Policy and Standards Committees. Though these bodies represent Federal agencies, including DoD, VA, SSA, OSTP, and HHS, having more structured input into the deliberations of the advisory committees would be helpful.
- Identifying key Federal government HIT priorities and how best to achieve these priorities.

Action Item

We request that you designate a senior leader in your agency to serve on the proposed interagency HIT Task Force. Please forward your designee's name and contact information to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology in the Department of Health and Human Services at patricia.diggs@hhs.gov, 202 690 7151, within five working days upon receipt of this memorandum.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.