



Talking Points and Messages

October 2017

General Talking Points

These talking points are statements for conversations or presentations, and are intended to help build understanding and support of the Digital Bridge initiative. Choose the most relevant points for your audience and customize as needed.

Core Messages

- Digital Bridge is an **innovative partnership of health care, health IT and public health organizations**, with the goal to advance information exchange between health care and public health.
- **Vision:** To ensure the health of our nation through a bidirectional information exchange between health care and public health.
- Digital Bridge is a public-private partnership motivated by mutually beneficial outcomes. These outcomes include improved data for public health and clinical practice and lower costs for information sharing. It is not a regulatory effort designed to prescribe data sharing practices.
- Credible health and public health data are exchanged on a foundation of trust. Digital Bridge works to build trust among health care delivery systems, health information technology developers, and public health agencies through a governed process of prioritizing and balancing business interests, resource constraints, and technical requirements for the bidirectional information flow between health care and public health.
- Digital Bridge also acts as an incubator, cultivating projects that meet the goal of effective information sharing between clinicians and public health professionals.
- As its first project, the Digital Bridge collaborative has designed a **multi-jurisdictional approach to electronic case reporting (eCR)**. **In 2017-2018, Digital Bridge is coordinating eCR implementations at sites across different states and cities.**
- **What is electronic case reporting (eCR)?** Electronic case reporting is the automated generation and transmission of case reports from the electronic health record (EHR) to public health agencies for review and action. eCR is a valuable tool that reduces the burden of public health reporting of infectious diseases, while improving the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of the data.
- **Structure:** A governance body formed in the fall of 2016, with representation from public health, health care delivery systems, and electronic health record vendors. Workgroups are focusing on specific issues and reporting up to the governance body.
- **Support:** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the de Beaumont Foundation support Digital Bridge. Deloitte Consulting and the Public Health Informatics Institute represent the program management office, and support the day-to-day activities of Digital Bridge.
- **Legal and sustainability issues:** Digital Bridge is examining legal and regulatory issues to ensure patient privacy and data security for eCR and future use cases. We are also examining strategies to sustain eCR infrastructure over time and support additional information sharing opportunities that reduce costs and improve health.

Expanded Messages

I. Digital Bridge: The Collaborative

Communicating that Digital Bridge is a viable approach for effective information exchange between health care and public health (See messages specific to eCR in the next section.)

Health care professionals

- Digital Bridge will lay the foundation for greater bidirectional exchange of data between health care and public health so that clinicians can be more easily informed about and collaborate with public health during outbreaks.
- By collaborating through Digital Bridge, providers can describe what treatment guidelines and environmental risk factor data they want from public health and how it should be integrated into clinical workflows. This will empower clinicians with greater insights on managing chronic conditions, selecting preventative interventions, and reducing treatment costs.

Public health professionals and leaders

- Digital Bridge allows public health to speak with one voice and deliver a coherent message to health care providers and health IT developers that operate across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Digital Bridge creates a possibility of more timely and granular public health surveillance.

Electronic health record software vendors

- Digital Bridge ensures the perspectives of vendors are included. Digital Bridge allows health IT to proactively consider and create developments for the future.

Funders and influencers

- Digital Bridge will capitalize on existing privacy and security technologies protecting patient data, while exploring how our nation's health information infrastructure can become more connected. Greater connectedness among health care providers and public health practitioners will allow coordination that builds healthier communities.
- Building on sharing infectious disease intervention guidance, Digital Bridge will ultimately show how public health can access environmental information and social determinants of health in ways that improve clinical care and impact population health.

II. Digital Bridge Approach to Electronic Case Reporting (eCR)

Messages to increase understanding and uptake of the Digital Bridge eCR approach

Implementation Sites

As its first project, the Digital Bridge collaborative has designed a multi-jurisdictional approach to electronic case reporting (eCR). In 2017-2018, Digital Bridge is coordinating eCR implementation at sites across different states and cities.

- A Digital Bridge taskforce is coordinating implementations for eCR, based on the requirements and architecture created by previous Digital Bridge workgroups. Other workgroups are examining legal and sustainability issues.
- Sites in California, Houston, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York City and Utah have been selected to implement the Digital Bridge eCR infrastructure in a phased roll-out through 2018. A site includes a public health agency, a health care provider and data provider/EHR vendor.
- Sites will support five conditions initially: pertussis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, salmonellosis, and Zika.
- Preliminary results from implementation sites are expected to be available in early 2018.
- Existing health information interoperability standards and exchange approaches are prioritized over developing new standards and approaches.

Messages for specific audiences (benefits and values of the Digital Bridge eCR approach):

Health Care Professionals

- eCR will measurably streamline and simplify the case reporting and data collection processes. eCR will operate in the background of the electronic health record systems that health care providers are already using, greatly reducing labor costs associated with reporting.
- Using a centralized decision support service, eCR automatically conducts a sophisticated review of a reported case (e.g., patient location, health care provider location, lab results, state-specific reporting criteria) and sends the data forward as appropriate.
- eCR's automated innovation allows two-way information exchange, thus closing the loop with health care providers after a case is reported. Upon automatic transmission and analysis of the data, the health care provider will get a response letting them know if the case was indeed reportable in their area/state and to which agency the data was transmitted. In the future, this response will help connect providers to the latest disease treatment guidelines and outbreak response protocols. Receiving this response will help health care providers better understand the nuances of reportable data in their state and help improve patient care.
- Guidance material is available from Digital Bridge and partners to help both health care providers and public health professionals through the implementation of eCR in their day-to-day work.

Electronic Health Record (EHR) Software Vendors

- eCR will measurably streamline and simplify development and configuration of EHR software by EHR software vendors for their clients by reducing the need to accommodate local and regional public health reporting requirements.
- eCR is a stated attest objective for current Stage 3 of Meaningful Use of Health IT incentives. EHR software vendor support of requirements will enable their clients and associated public health agencies to declare readiness and receive financial incentives.
- eCR will provide information back from public health agencies on submitted case reports that may be incorporated into EHR software and provide enhanced clinical decision support such as condition and local jurisdiction specific guidance directly to the reporting clinicians.

Public Health Professionals, Directors and Leaders

- The automatic and streamlined approach of eCR will positively impact public health across the nation.
- Public health professionals will be able to interact more efficiently with health care providers to acquire more relevant information about particular cases.
- Implementing eCR will ultimately render most manual case reporting tasks, such as follow-up calls and data entry, obsolete. eCR is a time-and-cost-efficient tool that leads to rapid productivity in disease case reporting and data collection.
- Organizations that successfully implement eCR are seen as leaders and investors in the drive toward improved patient outcomes and public health on a national scale. eCR establishes core infrastructure for more robust information sharing between health care and public health. Initially, this will support the delivery of treatment guidelines and coordination during outbreak responses. Future plans include providing health care with information on patients' social determinants of health and environmental risk factors.
- Tools, resources, guides, technical assistance and training are available from Digital Bridge and partners (i.e., APHL, ASTHO, CSTE and NACCHO) to guide both health care providers and public health professionals through the implementation of eCR in their day-to-day work.

IT Directors and Staff

- eCR is a complement to the existing Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) Informatics Messaging Services (AIMS) that many organizations already use for electronic lab reporting. The eCR system operates in the background of existing EHR systems, reducing costly labor and removing human error from the equation.
- AIMS is hosted on the Amazon Web Services cloud and uses the Reportable Conditions Knowledge Management System (RCKMS) for jurisdiction-specific public health case reporting logic. RCKMS, developed by the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), will validate incoming electronic case reports and ensure they are routed to the appropriate public health agency according to applicable laws and regulations.
- There is already a network of tools, resources, guides, technical assistance, and training available – and even more in development – to help IT directors and their teams guide both health care providers and public health professionals through the implementation of eCR in their day-to-day work.

Policymakers

- The health of the community is improved as public health authorities will be informed more quickly of disease outbreaks, such as Zika and Ebola. The eCR technology lays the foundation for more effective information sharing to assess and manage natural disasters and other public health crises, like Hurricane Katrina and the opioid epidemic, respectively.
- eCR improves consistency of disease case reporting by health care providers, and the consistency and speed at which public health professionals receive disease case information. Together this will provide a more timely and complete picture of reportable public health threats translating into better public health surveillance.
- The automatic and streamlined approach of eCR will help reduce the development of duplicative and redundant public health information systems, for use by both health care providers and public health professionals.
- With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a wealth of partners, the tools and resources available to assist health care providers and public health professionals in successfully implementing eCR will continue to grow.

III. Outreach to other audiences

The Digital Bridge program seeks perspectives from a broad group of practitioners and stakeholders.

- The Digital Bridge website www.digitalbridge.us is the first place to direct inquiries about the project. The website includes a high-level overview, key documents, a timeline and a schedule of meetings. Also, products from workgroups are uploaded on the website as available. In addition, the program office will post progress of related eCR efforts on this website. The public can send comments and feedback via the email address info@digitalbridge.us and sign up for a monthly e-newsletter via the contact form.
- Representatives from the Digital Bridge governance body and project office will offer updates and engage in discussions during relevant events and committee meetings hosted by stakeholder organizations.

Please send questions or suggestions about talking points and communications tactics to Jessica Cook at jcook@phii.org

Questions about the Digital Bridge initiative? Email info@digitalbridge.us