



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Patrick J. McConnon, M.P.H.
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

Dear Mr. McConnon:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' (CTSE) position statement 06-EC-02 entitled "Establishing the standard of Health Level 7 version 2.5 (HL7 v2.5) for public health electronic reporting by January 1, 2008." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Public Health Informatics (NCPHI) recently approved its own position statement on this topic, and we believe that it is consistent with the CSTE position. Staff from CDC and NCPHI, in particular, consulted with CSTE in the development of the CDC position statement which seeks to encourage widespread use of HL7 v2.5 for public health reporting.

In June 2006, CDC issued a new guidance that calls for use of HL7 v2.5 as the national standard for public health entities to receive electronic messages by January 1, 2008. This consensus decision was based on the goal of exchanging public health information electronically by a wider user base than was possible under the previous guidance which called for use of HL7 version 3 (v3) messages. Specifically, this change requires that national notifiable disease messages are submitted to CDC in HL7 v2.5 format—not the HL7 v3 format.

CDC's NCPHI notes that this position statement moves public health into alignment with the implementation guidance of the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP) on the use of HL7 v2.5 format as the national standard for public health entities to receive electronic messages for biosurveillance and electronic laboratory reporting. The HITSP implementation guidance allows for the exchange of biosurveillance and electronic laboratory data in the form of clinical documents in addition to HL7 v2.5 messages. The Department of Health and Human Services is expected to make the HITSP implementation guidance a requirement for all electronic health information used by federally sponsored health systems.

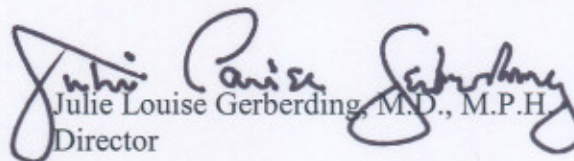
As an organizational member and primary benefactor to HL7, CDC continues to support HL7's broad spectrum of forward-looking initiatives, including further development of the HL7 v3 Reference Information Model, implementation strategies for v3, and use of Clinical Document Architecture (CDA) which will enable use of CDA solutions for public health reporting of cancer and healthcare-associated infections. CDC also works with the standards community and other

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partners to help make document-based exchange standards an operational reality. CDC's NCPHI continues to strongly support state and local health department research and operational activities that embrace leading-edge technologies and methodologies which will yield innovative and improved public health solutions.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a response to CSTE's position statement and applaud your commitment to this important public health issue. We look forward to continued collaboration with CSTE regarding public health issues of mutual concern.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director