

News Release

For Immediate Release

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New *Connections* community of practice funded by HRSA

ATLANTA, September 21, 2004 — *Connections*, a community of practice launched this month as a “virtual” collaborative environment, encourages peer-to-peer interaction among public health practitioners to explore issues of information systems integration and share their most promising practices.

Using Web-based communications tools as well as e-mail, conference calls, and an e-newsletter, *Connections* assists state and local public health agencies that are integrating information systems essential to improving the health of children, specifically those with congenital or genetic conditions identified through newborn screening. By participating in this dynamic collaboration, members of the community of practice will receive facilitated peer-to-peer support to help them move their systems integration projects forward more effectively.

A new initiative in the ongoing partnership between the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA/MCHB) and the Public Health Informatics Institute (the Institute), *Connections* will be funded by HRSA/MCHB and facilitated by the Institute. *Connections* builds on HRSA/MCHB’s commitment to expanding and strengthening newborn screening information systems and promoting their linkage to medical homes, early intervention, and family-to-family support programs.

Community of practice members include HRSA/MCHB’s *Special Projects of Regional and National Significance* (SPRANS) newborn screening information infrastructure grantees and other related public health agencies. An online collaboration tool, ConnectionsZone, will enable community of practice members to engage in threaded discussions, prioritizing and examining issues of relevance to their current integration projects and collaborating on solutions to common integration challenges.

A face-to-face meeting in Spring 2005 will provide an opportunity for community of practice members to network and collaborate in person. Over the next two years, *Connections* will document its findings and progress in three working papers, which will be published on the Institute Web site.

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About Public Health Informatics Institute

The Public Health Informatics Institute is a non-profit entity dedicated to advancing public health practitioners' ability to strategically apply and manage information systems. The Institute's goal is to foster effective health information systems through collaboration, innovation, and action.

About the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau

The mission of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) is to provide national leadership, in partnership with key stakeholders, to improve the physical and mental health, safety and well-being of the maternal and child health (MCH) population which includes all of the nation's women, infants, children, adolescents, and their families, including fathers and children with special health care needs.

Contact information

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For more information about the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau, contact Deborah Linzer, Senior Public Health Analyst, at (301) 443.1080, or e-mail dlinzer@hrsa.gov.