

Position White Paper

Fundamentals of Healthcare Data System Planning

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Healthcare delivery systems often function with overlapping priorities and functionalities. In today's world of data, it is important to consider all of the necessary tasks and then plan appropriately to accommodate these tasks. Once a plan is conceived, a timetable for the implementation should be developed and properly administered.

Now, more than ever before, computers are used to assist with many functions in an organization. Healthcare organizations are no exception. Each department in the organization, of course, has a different agenda. Because of the differing agendas, there is a need for different databases.

Although there is a need for different databases in the healthcare organization, there is also the opportunity to gain efficiencies by "pulling" resources. A data system, for example, may have one source of truth for customer information. This can be shared by many departments. When this is done, there is little room for duplicate entry errors and lost time with duplicate efforts.

Ultimately, an integrated System Plan will be needed to create the most efficient operations in the healthcare setting. The first step of the process is to itemize all needs by department. Each department should be interviewed in an effort to assess everything that is completed and what data should be collected. Current and future needs must also be documented in this step of the process.

Secondly, and subsequent to the needs assessment, the Plan should be conceived. Collective priorities should be determined through discussion. A consensus approach should be used to determine where efficiencies may be gained. As the plan is conceived, it is necessary to develop a project-oriented stepwise approach for the process. A timeline should be developed at this point as well.

Thirdly, and finally, the implementation process should be completed. A project manager for plan implementation will follow through each step of the way. Interfaces with other systems should be developed. This will help the organization realize efficiencies where few may have existed in the past.

During the implementation process, of course, problems will be encountered and trouble-shooting will be imperative. Adjustments to the plan will be made along the way and until the plan is successfully complete.

In summary, today's healthcare environment has created a very complex matrix of systems. Inherent in multiple computer systems is a phenomenon of duplicate effort. If a System Plan is conceived and implemented after a thorough needs assessment, efficiencies will be gained as less duplicate effort will be needed. These few, solid steps will only help the organization to run more smoothly and efficiently!

