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## **RIO ONE HEALTH NETWORK**

### **A Brief Presentation to County of Hidalgo Commissioners' Court**

June 14, 2011

Rio One Health Network is a Texas non-profit corporation recently awarded a planning grant by Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in Austin to design and implement a formal Health Information Exchange. A total of three years of state funding is available to develop this health exchange and requires the submission of a comprehensive Operating Plan by Rio One Health Network that is currently being developed under specific state and federal guidelines. The service area for this health network includes both Hidalgo and Starr Counties under the direction of a local non-profit board currently being developed.

This exchange will be comprised of physicians, hospitals and clinics, as well as ancillary health services such as lab, and pharmacy services. When fully operational in six months this exchange will become a formal health network with each participating organization's electronic health records (EHR) system capable of communicating patient information with one another in both Hidalgo and Starr Counties.

The goal of these new Health Information Exchanges is to provide the ability for network participating physicians, hospitals, pharmacies and laboratories to securely and efficiently exchange such patient information electronically between one another to improve healthcare delivery throughout the two Counties. This requires cooperation between all network participants to keep such health information current, available electronically and secure with prior patient authorization required before such medically required health information can be exchanged.

The potential advantages of an effective Health Exchange is improved patient care and reduce medical costs by reducing duplicate testing, reducing re-admission rates to hospitals, reducing medical errors and contra-indicated drugs and by consolidating pertinent health information in one secure location electronically that is available to these network participants only.

Hospital emergency rooms can potentially access information, for example, on patients in the network who arrive for emergency care without records to determine if any prior patient history exists or what tests or procedures are on file that were performed recently. This has the potential to greatly reduce the need, time and cost associated with re-ordering such lab, pharmacy and other expensive tests unnecessarily. It also is more patient friendly, and can help minimize patient and family anxiety during the visit, and avoid duplicate testing while at the same time improving patient safety through an efficient system of shared health information.

This also provides better continuity of care by readily accessing the patients' history in real time. Each encounter in the network is updated in the electronic health record of each patient and is then available to all network physicians and hospitals regardless of where the patient next seeks treatment, procedures or testing.

Rio One Health Network is developing a representative board of directors including physicians, hospitals, pharmacies, labs and business and has requested that a County of Hidalgo member be appointed at this time.

There are approximately 200 physicians already enrolled in Rio One Health and prepared to participate in this new network once the Operational Plan is approved by HHSC and funds for operations are provided by HHSC. Health Department Clinics as well as Federally Qualified Health Center are invited to participate. In addition, nine hospitals have enrolled to date in Rio One Health including in alphabetical order:

Cornerstone Medical Center  
Doctors Hospital at Renaissance  
Edinburg Regional Medical Center  
Edinburg Children's Hospital  
McAllen Medical Center  
McAllen Heart Hospital  
Mission Regional Medical Center  
Rio Grande Regional Hospital  
South Texas Behavioral Health Center