

Information Technology Lexicon - September 2000

For information and data users in the community the language of information technology is much like alphabet soup—the substance can be nourishing but a whole bunch of letters are just floating around in there without much meaning.

This list of abbreviations and brief definitions is gathered from many sources to give community Turning Point partners and their State, Local and Federal colleagues a shared place to start. Without shared language in this area the water gets muddy quickly. We all know how hard it is hard to problem solve together if we can't communicate. Where possible we have included a sponsor's initials following project definitions or terms in the event you need to track down more detailed information. At the end of this guide we have included a few Website addresses that you may find useful.

You are welcome to copy and share this guide or download this information at (ADD A WEB ADDRESS). Note the edition date to see if you have the most up-to-date copy. You can contact the Turning Point Information Technology Collaborative at: (ADDRESS and WEB or e-mail). Please let us know if you find the guide helpful. If you have additional acronyms to suggest send e-mail to: (WHO).

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P = Project

A = Federal or State Agency

O = Organization

Access	The ability to use a computer system. More specifically in regard to electronic medical records, the ability to inspect, review, retrieve, store, communicate with, or make use of health information system resources or patient identifiable data or both.
Accountability	The ability to trace the actions of an entity, such as a computer use.
Accreditation	The act of approving an institution to operate as a healthcare provider.
Accreditation Manual for Hospitals	The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations' standards for accreditation of hospitals.
Administrative agency	A governmental body other than a legislative or judicial one that executes policy in a particular area, such as the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.
Administrative regulation	A rule issued by an administrative agency to regulate the area in which Congress created the agency to execute governmental policy. Courts rank regulations below statutes when they conflict, but otherwise regulations have the force of the law.
APHL	Association of Public Health Laboratories
ANSI	American National Standards Institute – an organization that creates standards for the computer industry
Application Server	Server based software that provides specific services and capabilities for hosting applications which may be remotely called.
ASTHO	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
ASTM	Formerly known as the American Society for Testing and Materials
Audit trail	A security component of a computer system that maintains a log of which users accessed what files at what times to help detect unauthorized uses.
Authentication	An attestation that something, such as a medical record, is genuine.
Biometric identification	A device that authenticates a person by measuring a physical property that is hard to forge, such as a fingerprint, retinal pattern, or strokes and timing of a signature.
Business partner	Business partner means, with respect to a covered entity, a person to whom the covered entity discloses protected health information so that the person can carry out, assist with the performance of, or perform on behalf of, a function or activity for the covered entity. "Business partner" includes contractors or other persons who receive protected health information from the covered entity (or from another business partner of the covered entity) for the purposes described in the previous sentence, including lawyers, auditors, consultants, third-party administrators, health care clearinghouses, data processing firms, billing firms, and other covered entities. "Business partner" excludes persons who are within the covered entity's workforce.
Business records exception	An exception to the hearsay rule that permits the court to receive records prepared and kept in the regular course of business into evidence.

Call back	A security device for remote connections to a network in which a user calls in, requests a connection, and hangs up. The computer system then calls back and thereby verifies that the caller is at the proper location.
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (A). CDC maintains over 100 surveillance and health information systems in support of its expanded responsibilities
Certificate (and Digital Certificate)	An electronic file used for security purposes. Certificates are used to verify a user or computer is who they claim to be and to encode data exchange
COBRA	Common Object Request Broker Architecture – a standard that allows programmers to share and reuse pieces of software by specifying the way that pieces of code can be called.
COM	Microsoft’s component Object Model – a Microsoft approach for that allows programmers to share and reuse pieces of software by specifying the way that pieces of code can be called
Computerized medical record	Electronically maintained information about a patient’s health status and health care.
Consent	Voluntary agreement. Consent may be expressed, such as by orally agreeing or signing a consent form, or implied (demonstrated by acquiescence or actions). For example, visiting a physician for a check-up gives implied consent to the physician’s touching the patient to the extent necessary to perform the examination.
Credentialing	The act of approving a healthcare professional’s access to healthcare facilities. The granting of hospital or other professional privileges, such as to admit patients, to perform surgery, and so forth.
COTS	Commercial off of the shelf software
Covered entity	Under the privacy regulations, all health plans, all health care clearinghouses, and all health care providers that transmit health information in an electronic form in connection with a standard transaction.
Covered information	Under the privacy regulations, individually identifiable health information that is or has been electronically transmitted or maintained by a covered entity, including such information when it is in non-electronic form (e.g., printed on paper) or discussed orally. In this proposed regulation, such information is referred to as “protected health information.”
CPR	Computer based Patient Record
CPRI	Computer-based Patient Record Institute
CSTE	Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Database	A collection of data organized for rapid search and retrieval.
Data entity	A discrete form of data such as a number or word.
Data element	A combination of one or more data entities that forms a unit or piece of information, such as a patient identifier, a diagnosis, or a treatment.
DataWeb	(formerly Standard for Public Health Information Exchange - CDC-HISSB)
DCOM	Microsoft’s Distributed Component Object Model – a Microsoft approach for that allows programmers to share and reuse pieces of software by specifying the way that pieces of distributed code can be called. DCOM components are like COM components, but they can be called from other computers.
Digital signature	A block of data that is appended to a message such that the recipient of the message can verify the contents and verify the originator of the message.
DTD	Document type definition – a type of file used by XML documents that describes how applications should interpret data
EJB	Enterprise JavaBeans – a server component standard developed by Sun Microsystems that allows programmers to share and reuse pieces of software by specifying the way that pieces of code can be called.
Electronically Maintained	The privacy regulations state that such electronically maintained information is that stored by a computer or on any electronic medium from which information may be retrieved by a computer, such as electronic memory chips, magnetic tape, magnetic disk, or compact disk optical media.

Electronically transmitted	The privacy regulations state that this term includes information exchanged with a computer using electronic media, such as the movement of information from one location to another by magnetic or optical media, transmissions over the Internet, Extranet, leased lines, dial-up lines, private networks, telephone voice response, and “faxback” systems.
ELR	Electronic Laboratory-Based Reporting (ELR) is the transmission of data of public health importance from clinical laboratories to public health agencies in electronic format.
Encryption	A data security technique that changes readable text into coded text. Computers receiving an encrypted message must have “keys” to decrypt data into its original format.
Firewall	Software and/or hardware that protects systems from access by unauthorized users and programs.
Format	The structured arrangement of data fields and elements that make up a particular transaction. The organization of data in such a way as to have a specific, agreed meaning to users.
GIS	Geographic Information Systems – software used to relate data to geographic location for the purposes of mapping, analysis and manipulation.
HAN	The Health Alert Network (HAN) provides specifications for minimum performance characteristics in high-speed connections to the internet, and robust, secure information technology needed for communications in a bioterrorist event (CDC-HISSB).
HCFA	Health Care Financing Administration. Two site-of-care identifier systems are widely used. One is the Health Industry Number (HIN), issued by the Health Industry Business Communications Council (HIBCC). The HIN is an identifier for healthcare facilities, practitioners, and retail pharmacies. HCFA has also defined provider of service identifiers for Medicare usage. Both HCFA’s provider of service identifier and the UPIN identifier will be replaced by HCFA’s National Provider File for Medicare usage.
Health Care Quality Improvement Act	The federal statute that establishes procedures for peer review, provides limited immunity for those who participate therein, and sets up a data bank to collect information on substandard practitioners.
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The Administrative Simplification (AS) provisions of the HIPAA are intended to reduce the costs and administrative burdens of health care by making possible the standardized, electronic transmission of many administrative and financial transactions that are currently carried out manually on paper.
HIN	One of two site-of-care identifier systems that are widely used. The Health Industry Number (HIN) is issued by the Health Industry Business Communications Council (HIBCC). The HIN is an identifier for healthcare facilities, practitioners, and retail pharmacies.
HL7	Proposed standard specification for implementing electronic communication of reportable information from laboratories to public health agencies using Health Level 7, a national standard for sharing electronic data in health care environments. The specification recommends the use of standard codes for tests (LOINC) and results (SNOMED).
HISSB	Health Information and Surveillance Systems Board (CDC)
HTML	HyperText Markup Language – an authoring language for the creation of World Wide Web documents.
Integrity	Correctness.
JAVA	An object oriented programming language developed by Sun Microsystems.
JavaScript	A scripting language for Web pages developed by the Netscape Corporation.
JDBC	Java Data Base Connectivity – a standard that allows Java programs to interact with any SQL-compliant database.
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations	A private, nonprofit association whose purpose is to improve the quality of health care through a voluntary accreditation process.

Key	A quantity used to encrypt or decrypt information.
LDAP	Lightweight Directory Access Protocol – a standard for computer directory services
LINUX	A free version of the UNIX operating systems that runs on a number of different computer types including those based on Intel microprocessors
LOINC	Local Observation Identifier Names and Codes for specific laboratory procedure names.
Medical record	A record that identifies the patient and documents the diagnosis and care the patient received.
Medical staff	The group of physicians that the facility has authorized to practice in the facility and that enacts bylaws and medical staff rules governing the medical operations of the facility.
Medical staff privileges	The authorization to practice medicine in a particular facility.
NAACCR	North American Association of Central Cancer Registries
NACCHO	National Association of County and City Health Officials
NALBH	National Association of Local Boards of Health
NAPHSIS	National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
NCIPC	National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CDC)
NCVHS	National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics
NEDSS	National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (P - CDC)
Non-repudiation	The ability to authenticate the sender of the message and its contents.
NPHSS	National Public Health Surveillance System
ODBC	Open Data Base Connectivity – a standard database access method developed by Microsoft Corporations
Organism List to Organism Mapping	A spreadsheet of reportable conditions and the SNOMED result codes used to describe the reportable laboratory findings.
Password	A unique identifier that allows the one authorized to use it access to information in a computer system.
PDCA	CIO directors will be made aware of the recently approved SDN policy document that requires a Program Digital Certificate Administrator (PDCA) in their CIOs and a process will be established for working with the CIOs to identify this person. (CDC-HISSB)
Peer review	Scrutiny of a healthcare professional by other such professionals to determine whether he or she is qualified to practice his or her profession in a facility and to identify and remedy patterns of unacceptable patient care.
Personally identifiable health information	Health information which contains the patient's identification (name, social security number, etc.) or a sufficient amount of other information to allow identification of the patient.
Personal security	The component of a security system that ensures that only reliable personnel have access to the thing being protected, that they are trained in security, and that they face discipline for breaches of security.
Physician-patient privilege	A law (or rule of evidence) that prevents a physician (or other healthcare professional) from disclosing confidences of a patient without the patient's consent with some exceptions, such as child abuse reporting and the like.
Privacy	The condition of being left alone or being secluded.
Privacy, right to	The right to be left alone. It usually consists of three related rights: to be free from governmental or other interference, to be free from intrusion into or observation of one's private affairs, and the right to maintain control over personal information.
Privileged communication or information	Information acquired by a physician or other professional in attending a patient that was necessary to treat the patient that the law treats as confidential. Such information is inadmissible in evidence and may not otherwise be released without the patient's consent.
Protected health information	See covered information
Quality Assurance	The evaluation of the quality and appropriateness of patient care.

Record	As a noun, the preservation of information or data on some medium so that it may be read at some future time.
Regular course of business	Doing a business activity in accordance with your usual habit or custom. Important in the business records exception to the hearsay rule.
Regulation	A rule issued by a governmental agency other than the legislature. Unless a regulation conflicts with a constitution or a statute, it has the force of law.
SDN	Secure Data Network – the CDC project to allow for secure data transfer between state and local health departments and the CDC across the Internet
Security	Anything that gives or assures safety
Security policy	A formal set of rules, endorsed by management, that provide the overall direction to an organization on information security.
Security standard	The Draft Regulations define this term as “a set of requirements adopted or established to preserve and maintain the confidentiality and privacy of electronically stored, maintained, or transmitted health information promulgated either by an organization accredited by the ANSI or HHS.”
SQL	Structured Query Language – a standard language for requesting information from a database
SSL	Secure Sockets Layer – a method for the encrypted transmission of data across TCP/IP
Standards	Clearly defined and agreed upon conventions for the operation of specific computing operations, formats, and data elements.
Subpoena	A written command requiring a person to appear at a trial or hearing and give testimony.
Subpoena duces tecum	A written command requiring a person to bring with him or her certain records or documents in his or her custody and possession.
System security	That component of a security program that integrates physical and personnel security with procedures designed to protect the thing needing protection.
TCP/IP	Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol – standards that are the basis for data transmission on the Internet and over LANs (local area networks) and WANS (wide area networks)
Tokens	A security device that displays a code for network login
Tort	A civil, as opposed to a criminal, wrong. One who commits a tort is liable to the victim for the damages suffered thereby.
Trojan horse	A computer program which appears to function properly, but performs unauthorized actions.
Utilization review	The process of determining whether medical care was appropriately and properly performed.
Virus	A computer program that replicates by embedding itself in other programs and performs an unauthorized function, such as destroying data.
Workstation	A single-user computer, such as a personal computer.
X12	A set of standards for electronic data exchange for business transactions
X.500	A standard for computer based directories
X.509	A standard for defining digital certificates
XML	eXtensible Markup Language – a language for formatting and describing data that enables exchange between systems
Product and Supply Labeling Identifiers:	
LIC	The Labeler Identification Code (LIC) identifies the manufacturer or distributor and is issued by HIBCC. LIC is one of three product and supply identifiers (UPC; NDC) that are widely accepted. (HIBCC, 1994) The LIC is used both with and without bar codes for products and supplies distributed within a healthcare facility.

UPC	The Universal Product Code (UPC) is maintained by the Uniform Code Council and is typically used to label products that are sold in retail settings. UPC is one of three product and supply identifiers (LIC; NDC) that are widely accepted. (HIBCC, 1994)
NDC	The National Drug Code (NDC) also serves as an identifier. NDC is one of three product and supply identifiers (LIC; UPC) that are widely accepted. (HIBCC, 1994)
SDN	“Secure Data Network Standards and Procedures” (SDN) policy document adopted by HISSB
SNOMED	Systematized Nomenclature for Human and Veterinary Medicine for descriptions of findings, notably organism names.
SPHINX	accessible databases (CDC-HISSB Project)
UPIN	Universal Physician Identifier Number (UPIN) is only assigned to physicians who handle Medicare patients (HCFA). To address this limitation, HCFA is developing the National Provider File (NPF).
UHID	Universal Health Care Identifier