

# Press Release



Washington, DC  
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For Immediate Release  
[www.ehdc.org](http://www.ehdc.org)

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### ***eHealth Initiative Foundation Releases Guiding Principles for the Ethical Use of Social Determinants of Health Data Developed by Industry Collaborative***

**WASHINGTON – June 27, 2019** –eHealth Initiative (eHI) Foundation released *Guiding Principles for the Ethical Use of Social Determinants of Health Data* at a Capitol Hill event this morning. A cross-industry collaborative of healthcare stakeholders developed the principles to educate the industry and policymakers on the ethics of using social determinants of health (SDOH) data. As a result of several months of discussions and in-person meetings, the group released a document [<https://www.ehdc.org/pages/social-determinants-health>] that outlines five principles, provides specific examples of appropriate use of SDOH data, and lists several dozen organizations that support the principles.

In the last decade, overwhelming research has revealed that social, economic, and environmental factors, referred to as SDOH, significantly influence health. Some payers and providers are now considering the use of SDOH data to identify patients with SDOH needs and facilitate interventions which could improve care.

“Because of the sensitive nature of this consumer data, we felt it was critical to put a stake in the ground around the ethical use of this data,” said Jennifer Covich Bordenick, Chief Executive Officer, eHealth Initiative & Foundation. “Lots of industry groups are publishing papers and producing research, but there is not a lot of direction about how to use this data. eHI’s diverse coalition of healthcare leaders believes there is a way to do this that improves health, protects consumers and promotes transparency.”

“The Marshfield Clinic Health System is very honored to be a part of this important process. Addressing the social determinants of health is a must in healthcare today and doing so the right way is equally important. This process lays the groundwork for how to best do that in an ethical, standardized way,” said Susan Turney, MD, Chief Executive Officer, Marshfield Clinic Health System.

eHealth Initiative included consumer groups in the development of the principles. “The use of social determinants of health (SDOH) data has the potential to enhance cardiovascular care for all and to improve health outcomes for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. However, its use carries with it significant ethical considerations and responsibility to assure such data are protected and used only for individual or population health improvement purposes. eHealth initiative lays the groundwork by establishing a framework for the ethical use of SDOH data to improve outcomes and assess impact while protecting the privacy interests of individuals,” said Eduardo Sanchez, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer for Prevention, and Chief, Center of Health Metrics and Evaluation, American Heart Association.

“As an industry, we realize that improving the health of our communities and providing the right care plans depends on our ability to understand patients as people first—treating the person and addressing barriers to health, not just the disease,” stated Josh Schoeller, Senior Vice President & General Manager, LexisNexis Risk Solutions.

The five Guiding Principles address care coordination, recognizing risk through analytics, mapping community resources and identifying gaps; service and impact assessment; and using SDOH as a tool for customizing health services and interventions. Specifically:

- **Care Coordination-** Identify individuals with SDOH needs, coordinate and deliver more holistic care, facilitate connections to additional interventions or services, consistent with privacy and security protections
- **Recognizing Risk Through SDOH Analytics-** Identify risk through the use of analytic tools, in order to develop population health management interventions for individuals and communities
- **Mapping Community Resources and Identifying Gaps-** Assess individual SDOH needs against available community resources to identify gaps that address health and wellness

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- **Service and Impact Assessment**-Assess impact of SDOH interventions and services
- **SDOH as a Tool for Customizing Health Services and Interventions**-Use SDOH as a guide for quality discussions with individuals (or their designated guardians) and caregivers to jointly decide which services and interventions are the best fit

## About eHealth Initiative & Foundation

eHealth Initiative & Foundation (eHI) convenes executives from every stakeholder group in healthcare to discuss, identify and share best practices to transform the delivery of healthcare using technology and innovation. eHI, and its coalition of members, focus on education, research, and advocacy to promote the use of sharing data to improve health care. Our vision is to harmonize new technology and care models in a way that improves population health, consumer experiences and lowers costs.

eHI serves as a clearinghouse, and has become the go-to resource for the industry through its [eHealth Resource Center](#). For more information, visit [ehidc.org](http://ehidc.org).