MDI Connect – Frequently Asked Questions

What is MDI Connect?

MDI (Medicolegal Death investigation) Connect is a joint initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners (COMEC) and the CDC Foundation. Through MDI Connect, medical examiner and coroner offices work together to enhance data sharing between their offices and public health, toxicology or other agencies.

Who participates in MDI Connect?

MDI Connect is comprised of medicolegal death investigation (MDI) offices that are leading the way in MDI data modernization. These offices, their key data sharing partners, information management system vendors and subject matter experts work together to design, build and test Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR®)-enabled MDI data exchange practices. Participating MDI offices are innovating using standards-based approaches that are scalable and reusable across multiple locations with different data entities.

What is the challenge that the MDI Connect is addressing?

MDI offices and their key data sharing partners rely on one another's data to inform decisions. However, current methods of data exchange are inefficient and resource intensive. Historically, MDI case management systems (CMS) were developed to manage MDI operations and store case data internally with limited capability of sharing data electronically with external partners. The MDI offices are overwhelmed with data requests. Giving MDI offices, public health professionals and others a solution to share, access and manage data efficiently is critical now and for future action.

Why focus on standards-based exchanges of MDI data?

Interoperability protocols provide the ability to access and process data from multiple sources, even if stored in different formats and locations. In addition, interoperability standards increase data security by maintaining strict control over the movement of data, similar to how a chain of custody tracks movement of evidence. To implement interoperability, a common data exchange and data transport standard must be adopted.

What is the data standard used by the MDI Connect?

FHIR® is a next generation interoperability standard created by a recognized standards development organization, with high acceptance and use. FHIR® standards combine reusable, flexible data standards for ease of implementation with application programming interface (API) technology for data. The use of established standards and technology promotes timely data access, making data exchange between systems more efficient.

How are participants in the MDI Connect testing interoperability?

MDI offices and data sharing partners work together to understand the process by which data currently move between their systems and work with the technologists to envision and test a more modern approach that improves efficiency and data quality. Information Management System developers use the FHIR® standards to develop innovative solutions to interoperability challenges. Developers join office hour calls with FHIR® subject matter experts to learn and test tools created specifically for this project.

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