



Jeb Bush  
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.  
Secretary, Department of Health

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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Monday, January 09, 2006

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Pinellas County Health Department Awarded One of Nine FHIN Grants

The **Pinellas County Health Department** was selected as **one of nine recipients** of state funding under the new **Florida Health Information Network (FHIN)** grants award program, in a Friday (Jan. 6) morning ceremony at the University of South Florida College of Public Health.

“This is the cutting edge,” said Florida Lt. Governor Toni Jennings, who attended the event with Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) Secretary Alan Levine. “These nine projects put Florida at the forefront of the national electronic medical records movement.”

AHCA, the state agency chosen to administer the grant funds, awarded the Pinellas County Health Department **\$110,985** in Category 1 (Planning) funds to develop an action plan for the proposed Pinellas Regional Health Information Organization: Diabetes and Pediatric Asthma Health Information Exchange (**Pinellas RHIO**).

**Pinellas RHIO** is one of 13 Pilot Projects identified by the state and listed on the FHIN web site: [http://ahca.myflorida.com/dhit/pilot\\_projects.shtml](http://ahca.myflorida.com/dhit/pilot_projects.shtml) .

A total of \$1.5 million in matching funds was provided by the state legislature in response to initiatives by both President George W. Bush and Florida Governor Jeb Bush to develop and implement a strategy for the adoption and use of electronic health records.

Pinellas RHIO will be administered through the Pinellas County Health Department’s Information Technology (IT) Division, under the supervision of Assistant Health Director Claude M. Dharamraj, M.D., M.P.H. and FHIN Project Director Marisa Pfalzgraf.

Declaring an overall goal to reduce the incidence and economic burden of diabetes and pediatric asthma, Pinellas RHIO will strive to create an action plan with **two main components**:

1. To supply clinical and public health chronic disease information/data currently missing from FHIN pilot health information exchanges (HIEs) now developing under the Tampa Bay RHIO umbrella (Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation and USF/ACH)

(MORE)



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2. to demonstrate how public health information/data can be utilized to provide critical health outcomes and patient health quality data in the evaluation of target HIEs

The grant provides for a 19-person **Pinellas RHIO Advisory & Planning Board** which includes many of the important healthcare stakeholders in Pinellas County.

The Pinellas RHIO also includes a second component which has not yet been funded. The **Pinellas Injury Surveillance Exchange (PISE)** seeks to reduce the burden of injury in Pinellas County by creating a countywide injury surveillance system that interacts with existing infrastructures of bioterrorism, EMT and other electronic mortality/morbidity databases.

“We are confident we will find the funds to support this project, as well,” said Pinellas County Health Department Assistant Health Director Claude M. Dharamraj, M.D., M.P.H.

Lt. Gov. Jennings also announced that Gov. Bush has asked the legislature for \$5 million in FHIN monies in his next state budget. Another round of (legislature-funded) FHIN grant initiatives will be announced in March.

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*The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.*  
[www.PinellasHealth.com](http://www.PinellasHealth.com)