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## **New HL7<sup>®</sup> FHIR<sup>®</sup> Accelerator Project Aims to Improve Interoperability of Social Determinants of Health Data**

**ANN ARBOR, Mich. and LEAWOOD, Kan.** – Health Level Seven<sup>®</sup> International (HL7<sup>®</sup>), the global authority for interoperability in health information technology, and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the only medical society devoted solely to primary care, are pleased to announce that the **Gravity Project** is now part of the HL7<sup>®</sup> FHIR<sup>®</sup> Accelerator Program.

The Gravity Project aims to standardize medical codes to facilitate the use of social determinants of health-related data in patient care, care coordination between the health and human services sectors, population health management, value-based payment and clinical research. Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.

The HL7 FHIR Accelerator Program is designed to assist implementers across the health care spectrum to create HL7 FHIR implementation guides and other products that can facilitate FHIR acceleration and adoption activities. Other projects within the Accelerator Program include Argonaut, Da Vinci and CARIN Alliance.

Why the Gravity Project? Unmet social needs including limited access to food, transportation and housing can negatively impact health outcomes. Research has demonstrated that addressing social and medical needs in tandem improves health outcomes and lowers costs.

“Progress in patient care and research has made significant strides with the emergence of the HL7 FHIR Accelerator Program,” said HL7 International CEO Charles Jaffe, MD, PhD. “By incorporating the social

determinants of health care into our decision process, the Gravity Project will help to transform care delivery and health analytics.”

In this context of mounting interest around collecting and using SDOH data in health care settings, new challenges have emerged related to the capacity of existing medical terminology standards to effectively capture, use and exchange the necessary data.

The Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) at the Center for Health and Community, University of California, San Francisco, was an early catalyst of the Gravity Project, convening a diverse group of stakeholders as early as November 2017 to develop a strategy for achieving consensus-based comprehensive coding standards for SDOH data capture in EHR systems.

“With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and in partnership with EMI Advisors LLC, SIREN is pleased to be working with multiple stakeholders to meet the rapidly expanding market needs around SDOH data documentation and interoperability,” said SIREN Director and UCSF Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine, Laura Gottlieb, MD, MPH. “Building on work originally supported by Kaiser Permanente and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Gravity Project’s new partnership with HL7 will strengthen the capacity for SDOH information exchange between stakeholders, including clinical providers, patients, community organizations and payers.”

The [Gravity Project](#) has established a public collaborative process initially focused on three domains: food security, housing stability and quality, and transportation access. The project is working to:

- Develop use cases to support documentation for screening, diagnosis, treatment/intervention, and planning activities within EHR and related systems;
- Identify common data elements and their associated value sets to support the uses cases;
- Develop a consensus-based set of recommendations on how best to capture and group these data elements for interoperable electronic exchange and aggregation; and
- Develop an HL7 Fast Health Interoperability Resource (FHIR) Implementation Guide based on the defined use cases and associated data sets.

“The AAFP is pleased to act as convener for the Gravity Project and support information interoperability efforts,” said Shawn Martin, senior vice president of advocacy, practice advancement and policy for the American Academy of Family Physicians. “Our vision is to transform health care by addressing the social determinants of health through efforts such as our innovative HealthLandscape geoanalytics platform and The EveryONE Project to help family physicians take action and confront health disparities head-on.

The important work of the Gravity Project will advance data exchange and allow family physicians to better care for patients and communities.”

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) is an active member of HL7’s initiatives to advance interoperability, and has joined SIREN and AmeriHealth Caritas in co-sponsoring the Gravity Project launch. Additionally, both the BCBS System and AmeriHealth Caritas have several programs in place to address SDOH, including actively collecting SDOH health data, engaging community health workers, providing rides to doctor appointments, and delivering healthy, affordable meals to people’s homes.

“The social and environmental conditions in which we live, such as access to healthy food and housing or reliable transportation, are critical to our health,” said Dr. Trent Haywood, chief medical officer for BCBSA and president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Institute. “The Gravity Project will help enable the data interoperability that allows the entire health care community to address barriers that limit the ability to achieve optimal health.”

The Gravity Project has convened over 500 experts from across the nation including clinical and community-based provider groups and payers to health technology developers and standards stewards, to collaboratively develop recommendations for how best to capture data about food, housing, and transportation risks and needs, for interoperable electronic health information exchange.

“AmeriHealth Caritas has been actively collecting social determinants of health data from member households for the past two years to help us better address their needs,” said Andrea Gelzer, MD, senior vice president of medical affairs for AmeriHealth Caritas. “The Gravity Project affirms our collective belief that standardizing the ways in which we all collect data will enable providers, plans, and other supportive agencies to quickly and more strategically mobilize care for the populations we serve.”

Participation in the Gravity Project is open to all interested organizations and individuals.

“We are pleased to coordinate and facilitate an open, transparent, and virtual community via the HL7 suite of collaboration tools,” said Evelyn Gallego, MBA, MPH, CPHIMS, program manager for the Gravity Project, and EMI Advisors CEO. “We invite all interested parties to visit the [HL7 Confluence page](#) to learn more about the Gravity Project, including how to become a participant and/or a sponsor of this important endeavor.”

For more information about the HL7® FHIR® Accelerator Program, visit [www.hl7.org/about/fhiraccelerator](http://www.hl7.org/about/fhiraccelerator).

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## **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND AND RESOURCES**

### **About Health Level Seven International (HL7)**

Founded in 1987, Health Level Seven International is the global authority for health care information interoperability and standards with affiliates established in more than 30 countries. HL7 is a nonprofit, ANSI accredited standards development organization dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information that supports clinical practice and the management, delivery and evaluation of health services. HL7's more than 2,000 members represent approximately 500 corporate members, which include more than 90 percent of the information systems vendors serving health care. HL7 collaborates with other standards developers and provider, payer, philanthropic and government agencies at the highest levels to ensure the development of comprehensive and reliable standards and successful interoperability efforts. For more information, please visit: [www.HL7.org](http://www.HL7.org).

### **About the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)**

Founded in 1947, the American Academy of Family Physicians represents 134,600 physicians and medical students nationwide, and it is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five of the total medical office visits in the United States per year—more than any other specialty. Family physicians provide comprehensive, evidence-based, and cost-effective care dedicated to improving the health of patients, families and communities. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing and personal patient-physician relationship where the family physician serves as the hub of each patient's integrated care team. More Americans depend on family physicians than on any other medical specialty. To learn more about the AAFP and family medicine, visit [www.aafp.org/media](http://www.aafp.org/media). Follow us on social media.

### **About the Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN)**

The [Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network](#) (SIREN) was established at the Center for Health and Community at the University of California, San Francisco in 2016. SIREN's mission is to catalyze and disseminate high quality research that advances health care sector initiatives to improve social conditions. SIREN activities include synthesizing, catalyzing, and disseminating high quality research to fill evidence gaps and supporting a network of researchers in this area.

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### **About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association**

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 36 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide health care coverage for one in three Americans. The Blue Cross Blue Shield Institute is an independent licensee of BCBSA. BCBSA provides health care insights through [The Health of America Report](#) series and the national BCBS Health Index. For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit [bcbs.com](http://bcbs.com). We also encourage you to connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and check out our [blog](#).

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### **About AmeriHealth Caritas**

AmeriHealth Caritas is one of the nation's leaders in health care solutions for those most in need. Operating in 11 states and the District of Columbia, AmeriHealth Caritas serves more than 5 million Medicaid, Medicare, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) members through its integrated managed care products, pharmaceutical benefit management and specialty pharmacy services, and

behavioral health services. Headquartered in Philadelphia, AmeriHealth Caritas is a mission-driven organization with more than 35 years of experience serving low-income and chronically ill populations. AmeriHealth Caritas is part of the Independence Health Group in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. For more information, visit [www.amerihealthcaritas.com](http://www.amerihealthcaritas.com).  
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