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T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 M1 M2

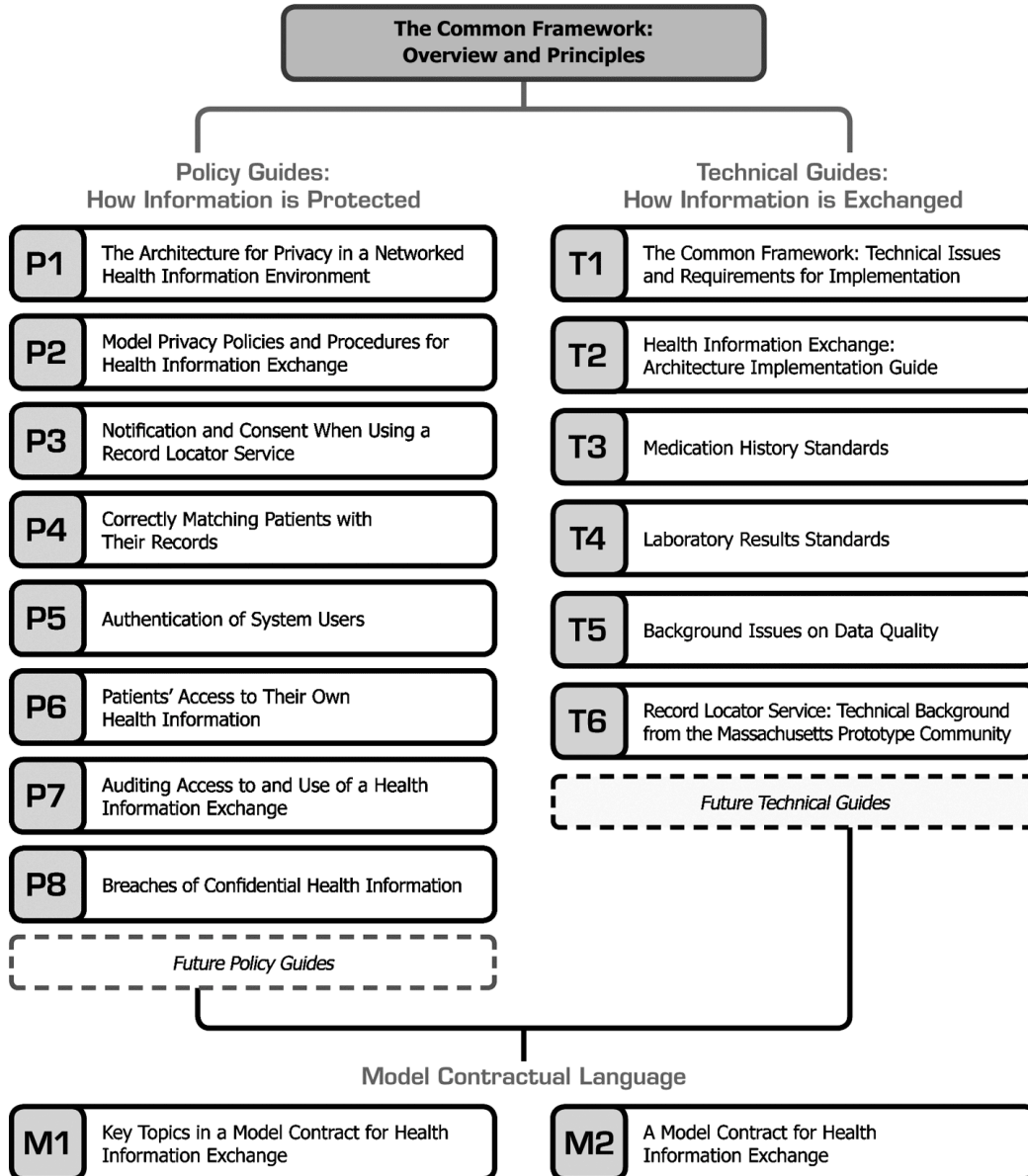
The Connecting for Health Common Framework:

Overview and Principles

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CONNECTING FOR HEALTH COMMON FRAMEWORK

The document you are reading is part of *The **Connecting for Health** Common Framework*, which is available in full and in its most current version at: <http://www.connectingforhealth.org/>. The Common Framework will be revised and expanded over time. As of April 2006, the Common Framework included the following published components:



A Statement on the Common Framework from Members of the Connecting for Health Steering Group:

The members of **Connecting for Health** passionately believe that the private and secure exchange of health information nationwide is essential to the well-being of patients and those who care for them.

It has been nearly two years since we published the "Roadmap" report—*Achieving Electronic Connectivity in Healthcare: A Preliminary Roadmap from the Nation's Public and Private Sector Healthcare Leaders*. Today we take a step further with release of the Common Framework.

The *Roadmap* sketched a bold vision of nationwide health information exchange through a decentralized network of networks united by a "Common Framework" of shared policies and technical standards. The report was groundbreaking not only in its practical vision that put patient privacy first, but also in the diversity of stakeholders that participated in its development. Our members overcame sometimes contradictory viewpoints to find shared solutions to problems that have remained intractable for decades. More than 50,000 copies of the *Roadmap* are now in circulation.

In early 2005 we broadened and deepened the *Roadmap* vision by collaborating on a joint response to a Request for Information issued by the Federal Office of the National Coordinator with an even more diverse group of 13 influential organizations in addition to the 100 or so members of the Steering Group. Through these efforts our vision and words gained greater clarity and reach than we had dreamed possible. But we were determined not to stop at words.

Within the last year we have built a working prototype of the *Roadmap* model—together we have learned how three very different communities, with different hardware, software, and organizational structures, can in fact share information in a private and secure way over the Internet using a Common Framework. Our partners in Mendocino County, CA, Indianapolis, and Boston worked closely with a **Connecting for Health** Technical Subcommittee and Policy Subcommittee made up of more than 75 people drawn from the **Connecting for Health** Steering Group plus other recognized experts. The Subcommittees helped to shape and test the prototype, documented the lessons of its implementation, and drafted a first iteration of the Common Framework, which we are releasing today. Although it is just a start, we are confident that it will evolve to meet the needs of a varied and fragmented healthcare system. We invite others to use, adapt, and help us to improve the Common Framework.

As **Connecting for Health** has been constructing a prototype and Common Framework, several complementary developments have taken place, building on the ongoing efforts of local communities: new communities for health information exchange are forming with great speed, Federal and State governments have put an unprecedented spotlight on the importance of health information technology, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of the National Coordinator have provided their leadership and millions of dollars toward a connected healthcare system, and Congress has sponsored many initiatives—all designed to further health information sharing.

Despite these efforts, the road ahead remains long and the precise path is uncertain; we must chart its course together. **Connecting for Health** and its many partners from across the professions, industry, and the patient community will continue to enable the private, secure, and nationwide exchange of health information. We remain committed to this goal because we know that access to reliable, relevant information where and when it's needed is essential to the improvement of healthcare safety, efficiency, and quality. A new infrastructure for health information sharing will also provide the foundation for a transformed, 21st century healthcare system in which patients and families can better understand their own health and engage more fully in their care through direct access to their own health information.

