

HIEs consider move to Mirth

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Mirth, an open source middleware solution, is gaining ground among health information exchanges. WebReach, a health information technology consultancy in Irvine, Calif., rolled out Mirth 1.0 as HL7-supporting messaging middleware in July 2006.

Jon Teichrow, president of WebReach, refers to Mirth as a standards-based interface engine for transferring information among systems. The list of supported standards now includes HL7 v2 and v3, X12, EDI, XML, and the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. The most recent Mirth release, announced April 25, supports the Digital Imaging in Medicine standard.

HIEs using Mirth include HealthBridge in the metro Cincinnati area, an exchange in Tarrant County, Texas, and an exchange in Mendocino County, Calif. In addition, an HIE launching in Houston is evaluating Mirth, Teichrow said. He said other HIEs also may be using Mirth, and noted that he is primarily familiar with those that purchase support from WebReach.

WebReach, as Mirth's primary corporate backer, provides commercial support and other services for Mirth. Open source wares such as Mirth let adopters avoid traditional software licensing fees. That suits HIEs, Teichrow said.

"I think the overall constraints placed on an HIE make them, out of necessity, look for low cost and high quality software and services, so they can have a sustainable model," Teichrow said. "Open source fits well with that."

In the government, the Veterans Affairs Department is evaluating Mirth. And WebReach has been discussing Mirth with the Defense Department. Those talks focus on WebReach's Mirth virtual appliances. The company offers a virtual appliance that employs VMware's virtualization technology and also markets a turnkey appliance that bundles Mirth with a hardened operating system and a Web-based management interface.

Teichrow said he views Mirth as comparable in features to the top proprietary interface and messaging systems. Other systems in the space include Orion Health's Rhapsody and NeoTool's NeoIntegrate.

Meanwhile, WebReach is expanding beyond the interface engine. The company already supports an open source repository of interfaces, which Teichrow said boosts the availability of interfaces to developers.

In addition, WebReach is developing an open source enterprise master patient index. Teichrow said the Houston and Mendocino HIEs are interested in becoming beta sites. The company also plans to create a record locator service. Both will be open source.

<http://www.govhealthit.com/online/news/350336-1.html>