



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning and Evaluation
Washington, D.C. 20201

Walter G. Suarez, M.D., M.P.H.
Chairperson
National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Road, Room 2341
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Dear Dr. Suarez:

Thank you for your May 28th letter to the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS), which included your attachment, titled *Toolkit for Communities Using Health Data: How to collect, use, protect, and share data responsibly*. Secretary Burwell has asked me to respond to your letter on her behalf.

Your perspectives on the data needs of our local neighborhoods as they focus on improving community-level and individual health are of great value to the Department. As communities become more sophisticated data users, it is incumbent that we keep pace in our support of their efforts. Your toolkit certainly offers helpful guidance to many communities as they maneuver in today's digital environment.

In your letter, you describe the toolkit as a substantive introduction to the elements of data stewardship, promoting sound data practices and offering advice to avoid missteps and potential harm. Also, you wisely remind communities that technology may pose many opportunities as well as risks across the data lifecycle, and offer practical examples of ways to keep a balance between the two.

The NCVHS has done a valuable service in listening to community representatives allowing them to share their experiences about data stewardship principles and best practices to assist in efforts going forward.

Please express our appreciation to the members of the Committee for their thoughtfulness in developing the toolkit. The Department looks forward to the Committee's continuing advice in efforts to use data to improve health and health care.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Frank
Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation