Implementation:
Phases in the Data Transition Process

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Phases in the Data Transition Process

Once you have decided to use an automated process to convert your valuable data into a new information system, properly planning for the conversion can be as important as any other piece of the implementation project. Below are the phases in the data transition process. Cooperation from and access to facility staff and new system vendors are vital during all of these phases. Also, the importance of active and early testing cannot be emphasized enough to ensure the success of the transition.

- **Investigation** - During this phase K2HealthTech obtains access to the old system or systems, obtains file specifications for the old systems, if possible, and obtains sample files or data from the old systems. We also obtain other spreadsheets or databases that externally support the old systems and we get the import file specifications from the vendors of the new systems. Access is typically performed using remote control software or by remotely accessing the client's network using other means. This greatly reduces the need and expense of travelling to the client's location in order to obtain access to the data.

- **Planning** - Here we determine what can be converted, estimate the level of effort and offer options for the client to consider. Setting the expectations of the client is performed during this step. Generally about 80% of your data can be converted in 20% of the time. Often it is the last 20% of the data that can take up to 80% of the time. It is also sometimes not practical to convert some data. For example, your old data may be from an older character-based system where you were able to enter the data in a 'free-form' manner. In some cases it may not be possible or practical to extract only certain parts of the text that was entered 'free-form' in order to place it into separate fields in the new system. Decisions like this are handled in the planning phase and K2HealthTech can supply the information the client needs to make an informed decision.

- **Coding** - During the coding phase we create cross reference tables, create input read lists, create output write lists, match up and format the old data to the new format, create error routines and exception processing routines. An example of what occurs in this phase might be taking information from an Excel spreadsheet used by your human resources department and the information from your payroll system and writing a program to combine it into one output list for the new system

- **Preliminary Testing** – In this phase K2HealthTech verifies that the output matches the vendor import file specifications and ensures that no data errors are introduced in the coding phase. Basically this is the step to make sure that 'apples' from the old information system will go into the 'apples' bucket in the new system.

- **Data Cleanup** - Here we find and correct duplication or omission of entries, find and correct format problems in the source data that cannot be resolved during conversion, re-obtain source data and re-run the conversion to verify the data was thoroughly cleaned up. K2HealthTech can perform this phase or it can be performed by the client depending on the degree of data cleanup that is necessary. K2HealthTech will advise the client on whether cleanup needs to be handled internally within the client's organization or whether it will be handled in the coding side. For example, in the old information system you may have had to key in the name and address of a single clinic in more than one place. You could find that every person who has entered this information has keyed it in differently. K2HealthTech can identify this issue and the client can inform us of the correct way that it should be listed in the new system. K2HealthTech will then convert all different spellings of the clinic to the new standard spelling and set up all its identifying information in the same way in the new system.

- **Pre-implementation Testing** – This phase includes submitting files for review by the new system vendor and facility staff, making corrections as needed, re-submitting files and repeating the process until the information is acceptable by all parties.

- **Implementation** – Because you may still be keying in new data and making changes to existing data while the conversion process is going on, K2HealthTech will then obtain the latest data files as of the 'cut-off' date. The 'cut-off' date is set as close to the 'go-live' date as possible yet still provide adequate time for final testing and last minute changes. K2HealthTech will re-convert the latest files, submit the new files for review by the new system vendor, make corrections as needed, re-submit corrected files and load the new files into the new information system.

- **Final Testing** - Finally, in this phase, the client, the new system vendor and K2HealthTech verify that the information that has been imported into the new system works correctly with the new system. If additional information needs to be converted or re-converted, then we make the changes as needed, re-submit the corrected files, re-load the files into the new system and re-test it as needed.

- **Acceptance** – Lastly, acceptance occurs when the new system is up and running satisfactorily using the converted data. Generally this phase is complete when the new system vendor is able to run through the test/training sessions just prior to actual go-live date. Sometimes a complete run through a month-end or pay period end process is necessary depending on the systems being transitioned.

One of the most important phases is the planning stage. Input from the new information system vendor, the client and K2HealthTech must all be agreed upon so that the client realizes a return on investment and a trouble-free transition to the new system. Remember, the automated conversion of your data is only part of the solution for a successful transition to a new system and good planning will identify the items that will need to be addressed before and after the converted data is successfully imported into the new system.

As with any project, issues need to be identified early on so they can be resolved well before the go-live date. Once you are up and live on a new information system and have processed a month of data using the new system, it sometimes becomes difficult or even impossible to adjust the data if issues exist that were not previously identified. Also, the active participation by staff and vendors in the pre-implementation and final testing phases is vital to the success of the transition. The clients know their data and are best prepared to identify issues that need to be addressed. Likewise the vendor knows their system and can ensure that imported data will work well in the new system. The amount of time the staff and vendor spend on verifying the imported data is far less than the amount of time they would have spent setting everything up from scratch. Data conversion also helps ensure consistency in how the new system is set up and used by your staff and is of particular importance for a multi-facility or multi-site organization who needs to get the most of the enterprise reporting capabilities their new information system may possess.