



## **NC HealthConnex Direct Secure Messaging**

### ***Giving Providers the Ability to Securely Exchange Health Care Data***

#### **What is Direct Secure Messaging?**

Direct Secure Messaging is an encrypted email tool that allows you as a clinician to send Protected Health Information about your patients through a secure encrypted network. This is performed through a standards-based protocol called the Direct\* framework. The NC HIEA offers this value-added service at no charge to its full participants.

*\*Direct is a national encryption standard for securely exchanging clinical health care data via the Internet. It is also known as the Direct Project, Direct Exchange and Direct Secure Messaging. It specifies the secure, scalable and standards-based method for the exchange of Protected Health Information (PHI).*

#### **Why should our organization use Direct Secure Messaging?**

Direct technology improves coordination of care between health care providers and their patients by providing the ability to communicate with other health care providers securely. Instead of mailing or faxing your patient's information, which could take from hours to days and is not secure, Direct Secure Messaging provides you the ability to send or seek information about your patient's health record within minutes. Direct Secure Messaging allows clinicians timely clinical details and helps to address the significant gaps in information that occur during transitions of care. These are just a few key clinical documents for which Direct Secure Messaging can be used:

- Transitions of Care (CCD, CCD-A documents)
- Lab Tests/Results
- Referrals
- Reports

#### **How do I get access to a Direct Secure Messaging account?**

All Full Participants of NC HealthConnex can sign up for this feature at no cost. NC HealthConnex leverages SES (Secure Exchange Solutions) as its Health Information Service Provider (HISP). Your Direct Secure Messaging account can either be integrated into your EHR or accessed through the NC HealthConnex Clinical Portal. *[Note: Additional fees apply for EHR integration.]*

If you would like a DSM account, please reach out to the NC HealthConnex Participant Account Administrator (PAA) for your facility to request an account be created. If you do not know how to reach your PAA or have general questions about DSM, please contact the HIEA team at [hiea@nc.gov](mailto:hiea@nc.gov) or call (919) 754-6912.

### **How does Direct Secure Messaging fit into my workflow?**

NC HealthConnex Participants have the option of using DSM Web or DSM XDR (EHR-integrated). DSM Web users access this messaging service through the Messaging Center within the NC HealthConnex Clinical Portal. Currently, the NC HealthConnex Web DSM service allows you to send messages to providers with Direct Secure Messaging accounts across North Carolina and receive messages from providers across the nation based on our directory setup. A future enhancement will replace the NC Provider Directory with the national Direct Trust directory. This will allow any valid DSM address nationwide to be searched for and selected to both send and receive messages. DSM XDR is a DSM service that is integrated within the EHR of the Participant, allowing users to stay within their EHR workflow to send and receive messages.

### **How do I know the Direct address of providers to whom I refer patients/need to send patient information?**

The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) offers its full participants a NC Provider Directory which contains over 21,000 HISP addresses within the state of North Carolina. This NC Provider Directory can be provided to participants as a .csv file upon request. The addresses are also in the NC HealthConnex DSM Web interface for Clinical Portal users.

### **Does Direct Secure Messaging help me meet the requirements of the CMS Promoting Interoperability (PI) Programs/NC Medicaid EHR Incentive Program?**

Program Year 2019 Stage 3 Promoting Interoperability (formerly Meaningful Use) Criteria require that health care organizations and providers meet data transfer requirements for electronic exchange of transition of care records using Direct Secure Messaging (DSM). These requirements can be demonstrated with Electronic Health Records that comply with the [ONC's 2015 Edition EHR Certification Criteria](#). For more information on DSM requirements specific to Eligible Hospitals and Eligible Professionals, click [here](#) to see the measure specifications on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' PI program website and click [here](#) to see how NC HealthConnex supports these specifications.

#### ***About the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and NC HealthConnex:***

In 2015, the North Carolina General Assembly established a state-managed Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) to oversee and administer the NC Health Information Exchange Network (NCGS 90-414.7). Housed within the NC Department of Information Technology's (DIT) Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), the NC HIEA operates North Carolina's statewide health information exchange--now called NC HealthConnex. NC HealthConnex is a secure, standardized electronic system in which providers can share important patient health information. The use of this system promotes the access, exchange, and analysis of health information to help improve care coordination, enhance quality of care, and enable better health outcomes.