



# Welcome Packet

## Full Participant

North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority

Dear NC HIEA Participant,

We are excited about your decision to connect to North Carolina's state-designated health information exchange, called NC HealthConnex. To help you in this process we are providing this Welcome Packet that includes a wealth of information to facilitate employee and patient education about your upcoming connection to NC HealthConnex. In the packet you will find:

**Initial Announcement Tools**

- Sample initial email from CIO/CEO
- Sample employee newsletter announcement
- Talking points to educate employees
- N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) fact sheet

**Go Live Announcement Tools**

- Sample press release
- Sample senior leader email
- Talking points to educate patients
- Frequently Asked Questions for patients

**Patient Education**

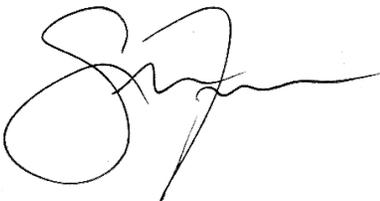
- NC HIEA Sample Notice of Privacy Practices
- 8.5 x 11 patient education fact sheet (also available via the [NC HIEA website](#) for you to print or provide electronically)
- Waiting room tri-fold brochure order form
- Opt Out form (also available via the [NC HIEA website](#) for patients/providers to access)

Now that you have an executed participation agreement and have moved into the technical onboarding process, you are welcome to begin training and use of NC HealthConnex services. Your connection does not need to be live to begin using these services. If you have questions or would like to schedule additional training, please contact our team at [hiea@nc.gov](mailto:hiea@nc.gov) or (919) 754-6912.

Your participation brings us one step closer to achieving the NC HIEA's mission of connecting health care providers to safely and securely share health information through a trusted network so that together we can improve health care quality and outcomes for North Carolinians.

We encourage your feedback on materials contained within this packet and your organization's experience using NC HealthConnex. Feel free to contact me at [Sam.Thompson@nc.gov](mailto:Sam.Thompson@nc.gov).

Sincerely,



Sam Thompson  
N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Executive Director

**N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA)  
CIO/CEO Email**

*Instructions: You may use this template email to alert your employees.*

Dear Colleagues,

We would like to announce that over the next several months we will be working with the N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and SAS Institute (the NC HIEA's technical contractor) to build a connection from our electronic health/medical record (EHR/EMR) system to North Carolina's statewide health information exchange - NC HealthConnex. The NC HIEA is the state entity that operates NC HealthConnex.

This connection will allow [organization name] to comply with North Carolina law, SL 2015-41 as amended by SL 2017-57, that requires health care providers who receive state funds for the provision of medical services must submit clinical and demographic patient data to NC HealthConnex by certain dates. Much like other health information exchange networks with which we may participate, NC HealthConnex is a secure, standardized electronic system that promotes the access, exchange, and analysis of health information by linking information from separate health care sites to create more complete patient health records.

The NC HIEA will enable our organization to:

- save time and reduce paperwork,
- facilitate more informed treatment decision-making,
- improve care coordination, and
- enable better health outcomes.

Having access to this system will give our clinical staff the information they need to make the best decisions possible when treating our patients. Approved users of NC HealthConnex will be able to share and access important patient health information like drug allergies, prescriptions, immunizations, diagnoses, and lab and test results from participating providers and hospitals statewide.

While we believe the use of systems like NC HealthConnex will improve patient care, patients can choose to opt out of having their information shared in the health information exchange. To educate our patients about this option along with general information about our use of NC HealthConnex, we will be updating our Notice of Privacy Practices and providing educational materials to our patients.

To assist employees in speaking about this new partnership with patients, friends, family, and the community at large, we have attached suggested talking points. For employees and clinicians with direct contact with patients, we will provide additional resources to help educate patients about NC HealthConnex. There will be more information on those opportunities to come.

If you have any questions about this exciting partnership, don't hesitate to contact [desired contact]. I look forward to continuing to expand and enhance the quality of services we offer our patients and community.

## **N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Announcement for Employee Newsletter**

*Instructions: Sample article to include in the next employee newsletter or internal news posting after the employee email is sent.*

### **[Organization] Plans Connection to the North Carolina Health Information Exchange - NC HealthConnex**

The U.S. health care system is experiencing a technological transformation. With the changes in value-based care reimbursement models, sharing data is going to be imperative. That is why we will be working to connect our electronic medical record system with North Carolina's state-designated health information exchange - NC HealthConnex.

NC HealthConnex is a secure, electronic network that facilitates a conversation between health care providers by linking information from separate health care sites to create a more complete health record of our patients. The system is operated by the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA), part of the Data Division of the North Carolina Department of Information Technology. NC HealthConnex will be a valuable tool to help us improve health care quality, enhance patient safety, and reduce overall health care costs by enabling information to be accessed securely whenever our clinical staff needs it.

Although our organization already shares patient information with providers caring for our patients, this process is often performed through fax or mail when the provider is outside of our system. NC HealthConnex empowers providers with near-time access to our patients' medical information from other participating providers when we need it to deliver care in a seamless and secure manner. This is especially important in emergency situations when waiting for a fax or email is not feasible.

As more providers across the state sign up to utilize NC HealthConnex, the more robust the exchange of health information will be, saving time, reducing paperwork, facilitating more informed decision-making, improving care coordination and enabling better health outcomes.

While we believe the use of networks like NC HealthConnex will help ensure North Carolina's patients are receiving safe, integrated and high quality care, patients can choose to opt out from having their health information shared through the health information exchange network. To educate our patients about this option, along with general information about our use of NC HealthConnex, we will be updating our Notice of Privacy Practices and providing educational materials to our patients.

To assist our employees in speaking about this new partnership with patients, friends, family and the community at large, we are providing a list of talking points **[located on our intranet, available from, pasted below, etc]**. For employees and clinicians with direct contact with patients, we will provide additional training and resources to help educate patients about NC HealthConnex and how to use this new tool. There will be more information on those opportunities to come.

The process to connect can take several months depending on the technological configuration requirements. During that time, we can begin training on and using the tools NC HealthConnex provides. We will keep you apprised of the status of this project. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact **[desired contact]**.

## **N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Initial Talking Points**

*These talking points should be used to educate and assist staff when speaking about the N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and the state-designated HIE, NC HealthConnex.*

### **What It Is**

- North Carolina's statewide health information exchange – NC HealthConnex, operated by the N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA), provides a secure, statewide network for doctors and other health care providers in North Carolina to share important patient health information and improve patient care.

### **The Need**

- Health care providers across the state recognize that information about their patients is not easily available to other providers who may be treating them in disparate locations. Even patient information contained within our local Electronic Health Record system (EHR) remains specific to our network and leaves gaps in patient care.
- As North Carolina strives to improve state-funded health care, it has identified the value a statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE) can provide as one of the tools to enable its success.

### **Purpose and Intent**

- NC HealthConnex is intended to improve health care quality and outcomes, enhance patient safety and reduce overall health care costs by enabling health information (via EHRs) to be available securely whenever doctors, nurses and specialists need it.
- The network combines information from all participating health care providers to create a more complete health record for our patients in the NC HealthConnex network. This includes important health information like prescriptions, allergies, vaccinations, lab results, X-rays, test results, conditions and diagnoses.
- Although health information exchange in North Carolina has a complex history, the NC HIEA is modernizing its approach and aims to positively transform the way health care is delivered.
- NC HealthConnex is available to all providers and is required of any provider receiving state funds for the provision of health care services (*NCSL 2015-241 as amended by NCSL 2017-57*).

### **Efficiency**

- North Carolina is taking a comprehensive approach to reforming Medicaid and making it more efficient and effective for the millions of individuals receiving Medicaid services. NC HealthConnex will be a critical foundational element of reaching that goal.

### **Security and Privacy**

- The NC HIEA takes patient health data privacy and security very seriously. In accordance with HIPAA regulations and state and federal law, the NC HIEA has and will enter into appropriate data sharing agreements and Business Associate Agreements with all organizations that will receive protected health information (PHI) from the NC HealthConnex network. The NC HIEA is fully compliant with HIPAA and state law.

- The NC HIEA is working with an industry leader, SAS Institute, to audit and strengthen NC HealthConnex and ensure the highest level of patient and data security.

### The Value of Connecting to the NC HIE

- Having access to NC HealthConnex helps us work more closely with other providers, make better care decisions, and reduce the chance of medical errors. This is especially important in emergency situations and during transitions in care.
- We've always shared information with other providers when needed to support patient care, but NC HealthConnex makes it easier, faster and more secure across the state.
- Research has shown that using a network like this will help improve care quality and safety, reduce medical errors, and lead to lower health care costs. Studies show that use of HIE in an emergency department reduces the odds of hospital admission,<sup>1</sup> and access to HIE reduces hospital readmissions<sup>2</sup> and repeat diagnostics like imaging.<sup>3</sup>
- NC HealthConnex also helps prevent the spread of disease through faster reporting of health threats to public health departments.

### What You Can Expect from this Connection

- We are currently working to connect our electronic medical record to NC HealthConnex and anticipate to go live in [month of anticipated go-live].
- In addition to the connection for the exchange of health records, NC HealthConnex offers additional services for our organization including notifications, registries, eHealth Exchange, Direct Secure Messaging, DSM Provider Directory, and single sign on to the Controlled Substance Reporting System. To learn more about the Suite of Services, visit [hiea.nc.gov/nc-healthconnex-suite-services](http://hiea.nc.gov/nc-healthconnex-suite-services).
- These services are available once we have a participation agreement in place. We do not need to wait to be live and submitting data to use these services.

### Patient Education

- Patients do not have to participate in this system and can choose to opt out of having their PHI shared through the NC HealthConnex by sending the [Patient Opt Out form](#) found on the NC HIEA website, [nchealthconnex.gov](http://nchealthconnex.gov), to the NC HIEA business office. We will also be able to provide the forms here in our office.
- If you have questions or concerns, please contact [desired contact].

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<sup>1</sup> Vest JR, Kern LM, Campion TR Jr, Silver MD, Kaushal R. Association between use of a health information exchange system and hospital admissions. *Appl Clin Inf* 2014; 5: 219-231. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4338/ACI-2013-10-RA-0083>

<sup>2</sup> Vest JR, Kern LM, Silver MD, et al. The potential for community-based health information exchange systems to reduce hospital readmissions. *J Am Med Inform* (published online first). Available: <https://academic.oup.com/jamia/article/22/2/435/694158>

<sup>3</sup> Vest JR, Kaushal R, Silver MD, Hentel K, Kern LM. Health information exchange and the frequency of repeat medical imaging. *Am J Manag Care*. 2014;(11 Spec No. 17):eSP16-eSP24. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25811815>



## ABOUT THE NC HIEA

### What is the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority?

Health Information Exchange (HIE) systems have been in development nationwide since a federal law was passed in 2009 to promote the use of electronic movement and use of health information among health care providers. HIEs exist to improve health care quality, enhance patient safety, improve health outcomes and reduce overall health care costs by enabling health information to be available securely whenever health care providers need it.

The North Carolina General Assembly established the N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) in 2015 to oversee and administer the N.C. Health Information Exchange Network, now called NC HealthConnex (NCGS 90-414.7). The NC HIEA is part of the Government Data Analytics Center of the N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT).

While participation is open to any health care provider, the law requires that certain health care providers who receive state funds (e.g. Medicaid, State Health Plan) for the provision of health care services must connect to NC HealthConnex (NCGS 90-414.4).

### Why is NC HealthConnex Important?



**North Carolina's state-designated HIE, NC HealthConnex, connects health care providers across the care continuum to a secure information network that helps them deliver the best possible care for patients and supports the state's vision for whole person care.**

This electronic exchange enables providers to see their patients' most up-to-date health information, including medications, lab results, allergies, image reports, conditions, diagnoses and vaccinations, leading to better-informed, integrated care for patients.

As payers increasingly move to alternative payment models that focus on value, NC HealthConnex gives health providers the tools necessary to improve care coordination and close gaps in care. NC HealthConnex also supports public health reporting and provides data services for syndromic surveillance, analytic reporting and patient matching.



#### Benefits To Health Care Providers

- HIPAA-compliant sharing with other providers
- Access to comprehensive patient records (CCD) at the point of care
- Access to secure, encrypted email through Direct Secure Messaging and a Provider Directory of secure DSM addresses.
- Cost savings due to elimination of duplicative tests
- Improved care coordination across providers with easier, faster and more secure sharing of information
- Improved diagnoses
- Improved workflow
- Easier patient referral process
- Ability to set up clinical notifications on patients to receive Admission, Discharge and Transfer (ADT) alerts, follow in-patient care, and set up follow-up care



#### Benefits To Patients

- Stronger trust in behavioral health/intellectual and developmental disability providers, knowing there is communication across health care teams
- More coordinated care between providers
- Less risk of unnecessary testing
- Less risk of avoidable complications
- Improved satisfaction/experience
- No more bringing hard copies of tests and information from other doctors' offices

## Value-Added Services

In addition to the core functionality of NC HealthConnex infrastructure, we offer full participants additional services designed to integrate more complete patient information into care delivery.

### Exchange Services:

- Access a patient's longitudinal health record via the web-based Clinical Portal or bidirectional EHR integration.
- Query neighboring state HIEs, and the VA/DoD via the eHealth Exchange network.
- Communicate PHI securely via Direct Secure Messaging.

### Notification Services:

- Get alerts in near real time as patients receive care in other settings with NC\*Notify, our event notification service.
- Provide timely follow-up on prescriptions or other discharge instructions from ED or inpatient stay
- Reduce avoidable readmissions and achieve financial goals under value-based care contracts
- Get alerts for chronic care management, high ED utilizers, diabetes diagnoses and more

### Population Health/Analytics Services:

- Classify and Measure Patient Population via Registries & Integrations
  - Diabetes
  - Stroke
  - Immunizations
  - Controlled Substances
  - Maternal Health
  - Syndromic Surveillance
  - Quality Measures



## Board Members & Leadership

### NC HIEA Advisory Board Members

**Dr. Richard Pro** (*Chair*)  
Chief Data and Analytics Officer, Cone Health

**Brent Lamm** (*Vice Chair*)  
Senior Vice President and CIO, UNC Health

**Ryan Craig**  
Vice President of Analytics, Lumeris

**Dr. Tammy Kiger**  
Physician, Carolina Family Health Centers

**Dr. John J. Meier**  
Internal Medicine & Pediatrics,  
Wake Internal Medicine Consultants, Inc.

**Tanya Thompson**  
Vice President, IS Applications, ECU Health

**Lauren Wiggs**  
Regional Sales Manager, OnTarget

**Ryan Wilkins**  
Senior Database Administrator,  
Crossnore Communities

### Ex-Officio Members:

**James Weaver**, Secretary and State CIO  
N.C. Department of Information Technology

**Kody Kinsley**, Secretary  
N.C. Department of Health & Human Services

**Christie Burris**, Government Data Analytics Center  
Director, N.C. Department of Information Technology

**Sam Watts**, Executive Director  
North Carolina State Health Plan

### NC HIEA Staff Leadership

**Sam Thompson**, Executive Director

**Jenell Stewart**, Assistant Director, Health Analytics &  
External Services

**Michelle Hunt**, Assistant Director, Operations



## **N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Press Release**

*Instructions: Please coordinate the release of this with the NC HIEA Executive Director Sam Thompson (contact information below).*

### **[Your organization's name] Joins NC HealthConnex, North Carolina's State-designated Health Information Exchange, to Improve Patient Care**

[Organization] recently announced its participation in the state-designated health information exchange, NC HealthConnex. This health information exchange network is being used statewide and will help [Organization] share a patient's important health information like drug allergies, prescriptions, medical conditions, and lab and test results with other health care providers with whom the patient has a relationship. This secure network is available through [Organization's] partnership with the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA), part of the Data Division of the North Carolina Department of Information Technology.

"We're very enthusiastic about this partnership," said [Chief Medical Officer or other medical professional]. "Having access to the NC HealthConnex network will help our clinicians get the information they need to make more informed decisions about our patients' care when they need it."

North Carolina is taking a comprehensive approach to reforming Medicaid and making it more efficient and effective for the millions of individuals receiving Medicaid services. NC HealthConnex will be a critical foundational element of reaching that goal. Connection to NC HealthConnex is available to all providers and required of providers who receive state funds such as Medicaid and the State Health Plan for the provision of health care services. It links information from separate health care sites to create a more complete health record for individual patients. This record combines health information from [Organization] and other participating health care providers a patient may see. NC HealthConnex is currently connected to [number] hospitals, [number] health departments, and [number physician practices,] and is growing steadily.

Health information exchanges like NC HealthConnex are being built in states and regions across the country and are widely viewed as central to supporting lasting improvements in our nation's health care system. These systems can reduce medical mistakes, improve care coordination, provide better patient outcomes and lower overall health care costs.

[Optional: Include information about your organization's experience with health information technology, particularly accolades, awards and other recognitions.]

For more information about [organization], visit [website]

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### ***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-- 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, quality of care, and enable better health outcomes. Additionally, the legislation requires that health care providers who receive State funds for the provision of health care services (e.g. Medicaid, State Health Plan) connect to NC HealthConnex by certain dates in 2018 and 2019.

For more information about the NC HIEA, visit [nchealthconnex.gov](http://nchealthconnex.gov).

-END-

[Organization Communications Contact Information]

Media Contact NC HIEA:

Sam Thompson, NC HIEA Executive Director

[Sam.Thompson@nc.gov](mailto:Sam.Thompson@nc.gov)

984-484-4760

## **N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Go Live Employee Email**

***Instructions:** This is a sample email to send out a couple weeks before “go live” to educate your employees on the NC HealthConnex connection and the opt out process. This should be signed and sent out by a senior leader of your organization.*

Dear Colleague,

[Organization name] will be going live with North Carolina’s state-designated health information exchange, NC HealthConnex on [date]. This means we will start sending patient data to the NC HIEA’s secure health information exchange network. When we go live we need to ensure our patients are aware and understand the benefits of having their key medical information linked in NC HealthConnex, as well as their ability to opt out.

North Carolina law requires that our staff notify patients of the benefits of the NC HealthConnex network as well as the opt out process and the right to rescind a previous decision to opt out. (See NCGS § 90-414.7b1d)

HIPAA requires that we notify our patients about the uses and disclosures of their health care data such as our participation in NC HealthConnex in [organization’s] Notice of Privacy Practices. (See 45 C.F.R. 164.520.)

To help you in this education process, the NC HIEA has provided:

- Talking Points for your use in educating patients (attached)
- 8.5x11 Patient Education Fact Sheet (attached)
- Tri-fold Patient Education Brochure [x number of copies available in waiting room]
- Opt Out Form (attached and found on the NC HIEA website at <http://hiea.nc.gov/patients>)

Additionally, we will begin assigning user access and providing training to the staff on our team who will be utilizing NC HealthConnex in care and treatment of patients. The person on our staff who is in charge of setting up NC HealthConnex participant user accounts is [insert name]. [He/she] will be following up separately to facilitate the necessary training and access credentials.

Remember, this is an important partnership for [organization], and we want to encourage our patients to participate. If patients have questions that you cannot answer, please direct them to the [NC HIEA website](#) or business office.

If you have additional questions regarding our partnership with the NC HIEA, contact [desired contact].

Thank you,

[Leader name]

## **N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Go Live Talking Points**

***Instructions:** These talking points are being provided to assist staff when speaking with patients about the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and the state-designated health information exchange, NC HealthConnex.*

### **Tell them about North Carolina's Health Information Exchange, NC HealthConnex**

- The state-designated health information exchange, NC HealthConnex, is operated by the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority, part of the Government Data Analytics Center of the N.C. Department of Information Technology.
- NC HealthConnex provides a secure, electronic network (computer-based) that will facilitate a conversation between your health care providers allowing them to access and share health-related information statewide - so that no matter where you are providers can access your information.
- The system combines information from all your participating health care providers to create a more complete patient health record.
- NC HealthConnex will be available to all providers and is required of any provider receiving state-funded health care. (NCSL 2015-241 as amended by NCSL 2017-57)
- States around the country have built similar health information exchanges to help improve patient care and reduce health care costs.

### **Explain the benefits of the system**

- Having access to your NC HealthConnex record helps us work more closely with other providers, make better decisions about your care, and reduce the chance of medical errors. This is especially important in emergency situations where having information on past medical history and medications in one place can help expedite care and improve outcomes.
- While we've always shared information with other providers when necessary to support your care, NC HealthConnex makes it easier, faster and more secure.

### **Explain how patient information is linked**

- Your NC HealthConnex record includes important information like prescriptions, immunizations, lab and test results, image reports, conditions, diagnoses or health problems. This not only helps us provide you with better care because we have a full view of your health, but it also reduces health care costs because it avoids duplicating expensive tests that have already been done.
- Starting on [go live date], your medical information will be automatically included in the NC HealthConnex secure system after each visit to [organization name]. You don't need to do anything.
- Even if you haven't been a patient of ours before, you may already have an NC HealthConnex record. A number of organizations have already started using NC HealthConnex.

*Talking Points, p. 2*

### **Security and Privacy**

- We have always been committed to safeguarding the privacy and security of our patients' information and you can be assured we will continue to protect your information.
- The NC HIEA takes patient health data privacy and security very seriously. In accordance with HIPAA regulations and state and federal law, the NC HIEA has and will enter into appropriate data sharing agreements and Business Associate Agreements with all organizations that will receive protected health information (PHI) from the NC HealthConnex network. The NC HIEA is fully compliant with HIPAA and state law.
- The NC HIEA is working with an industry leader, SAS Institute, to audit and strengthen NC HealthConnex and ensure the highest level of patient and data security.
- Only health care providers with correct identification and passwords can use the system, and they only use it when they need to support your care. Every time your NC HealthConnex health record is accessed, it's recorded in the system.

### **Educate about patient choices**

- You have the right to opt out of allowing your data to be shared through NC HealthConnex. You can fill out and mail in the opt out form to the NC HIEA Business Office. We recommend participating in NC HealthConnex as it helps us take better care of you.
- Opting out must be done by the patient or by a legal representative. Staff at [organization name] cannot do this for you. This is a privacy precaution.
- Your choice to opt out of NC HealthConnex will not affect your ability to access medical care.
- When you opt out, your health care data is still sent to NC HealthConnex but it will be hidden.
- If you opt out and later decide you would like to participate, you will need to fill out another opt out form rescinding your opt out and send it to the NC HIEA Business Office.
- Opt out forms are available on the NC HIEA website - <http://hiea.nc.gov/patients> and also [insert where in your office located].

## N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

### **Q. What is the NC HIEA?**

**A.** The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) was created to oversee and administer the North Carolina state-designated HIE network, NC HealthConnex. (NCGA § 90-414.7).

### **Q. What is an HIE?**

**A.** A health information exchange (HIE) is a secure, electronic network that gives authorized health care providers the ability to access and share health-related information across a statewide information highway. It exists to improve health care quality, enhance patient safety, improve health outcomes and reduce overall health care costs by enabling health information to be available securely whenever health care providers need it. The state-designated HIE in North Carolina is called NC HealthConnex.

### **Q. Can non-Medicaid providers connect to NC HealthConnex?**

**A.** Providers who do not receive state funding for the provision of health care services may also connect to the NC HealthConnex on a voluntary basis.

### **Q. What information is used to identify patients in the system?**

**A.** Information used to identify patients in the system is: name, date of birth, sex, address and telephone number. The HIE uses this information to make an accurate patient match and reduce errors.

### **Q. Is it against the HIPAA Privacy Rule for you to share my information?**

**A.** No. The HIPAA Privacy Rule does not require patient consent when information is used to support treatment, payment or health care operations as is the case with NC HealthConnex. It acts as a “virtual medical record department” to collect and store medical records on behalf of participating organizations. Having a third-party entity such as NC HealthConnex to provide electronic health information management services for busy practices and hospitals is a common practice that allows your providers to have timely access to the right information at the right time.

### **Q. What if I receive care at a health care organization that is not participating in NC HealthConnex, what happens to my records?**

**A.** Only providers who are participating in NC HealthConnex can access and include information in the system. If your provider does not participate, they will continue to update your medical record in their own system, and they will share your medical records as they always have, by mail, email or fax.

### **Q. What about mental health provider records? Are those part of my record?**

**A.** Information collected by a licensed mental health provider or facility will be included in NC HealthConnex. However, information that comes from a substance abuse treatment facility or psychotherapy notes will not be included.

*Frequently Asked Questions, p. 2*

**Q. Is there a record of who has viewed my health information and why?**

**A.** NC HealthConnex tracks who views patient records and performs regularly-scheduled audits of the HIE system. The system has strict user access policies in place so that only a clinician can see your complete record. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns about access to your records.

**Q. Do I have rights to access the portal to view my medical history?**

**A.** At this time, patient access to the NC HealthConnex is not functional. As North Carolina continues its focus on patient-centered population health to improve health care outcomes, it is possible that the NC HIEA would look to expand this functionality. The NC HIEA cannot fulfill an individual's request for a copy of their medical records. Patients can obtain a copy by requesting it directly from their medical provider.

**Q. Will my medical information be posted on the Internet or sold for a mailing list?**

**A.** No. All data is protected, stored and accessed only for purposes permissible under state and federal law. The NC HIEA takes patient health data privacy and security very seriously. In accordance with HIPAA regulations and state law, the NC HIEA has entered into and will enter into Business Associate Agreements with all organizations that will receive protected health information (PHI) from the NC HealthConnex. Information that identifies you will never be sold, and you will not be added to any mailing list.

**Q. How often is the system checked for security failures/hackers?**

**A.** Security tests are performed on an ongoing basis, to make sure that the records remain secure. For more information about security, please contact the NC HIEA business office directly at (919) 754-6912.

## NC HIEA Sample Notice of Privacy Practices

Pharmacists connecting to NC HealthConnex can utilize the following sample Notice of Privacy Practices to ensure that their patients receive notice of the disclosures that will be made. Please review and edit the Notice to make it relevant for your practice.

### Disclosure to Health Information Exchanges

*This facility participates in the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Network, called NC HealthConnex, which is operated by the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA). We will share your protected health information, or PHI, with the NC HIEA and may use NC HealthConnex to access your PHI to assist us in providing health care to you. We are required by law to submit clinical and demographic data pertaining to services paid for with funds from North Carolina programs such as Medicaid and the State Health Plan. We may also share other patient data with NC HealthConnex not paid for with state funds. If you do not want NC HealthConnex to share your PHI with other health care providers who are participating in NC HealthConnex, you must opt out by submitting a form directly to the NC HIEA. Forms and brochures about NC HealthConnex are available in our offices and online at [hiea.nc.gov/patients](http://hiea.nc.gov/patients). You may also contact our Privacy Office at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Again, even if you opt out of NC HealthConnex, we will still submit your PHI if your health care services are funded by state programs. Your patient data may also be exchanged or used by the NC HIEA for public health or research purposes as permitted or required by law. For more information on NC HealthConnex, please visit [hiea.nc.gov/patients](http://hiea.nc.gov/patients).*

## ABOUT NC HEALTHCONNEX



Your health care provider is connected to NC HealthConnex, the state-designated health information exchange.

### What You Need To Know



Health Information Exchange (HIE) systems have been in development nationwide since a federal law was passed in 2009 to promote the use of electronic movement and use of health information among health care providers. North Carolina's health information exchange, NC HealthConnex, brings added value to the health care conversations that are happening at all levels in the health care industry. Use of HIEs break down information silos between health care providers, help achieve greater health care outcomes for patients and create efficiencies in state-funded health care programs such as NC Medicaid.

#### What Is It?

NC HealthConnex is a secure, electronic system for doctors, hospitals and other health care providers to share information that can improve your care. The system links your key medical information from all of your health care providers to create a more complete electronic health record.

#### How Does It Work?

NC HealthConnex helps health care providers quickly access the information they need to make more informed decisions about your care, especially in an emergency. When needed, health care providers already share patient health records for your care through fax, email and mail. NC HealthConnex makes receiving information easier, faster and more secure.



*Without using NC HealthConnex, health care providers see only the information they have entered into your medical record. With NC HealthConnex, they see a more complete record, enabling them to provide you with the best care possible.*



#### What does it mean to be a part of NC HealthConnex?

As a patient, it means having peace of mind in visiting a new health care provider's office if they are participating in NC HealthConnex. If your information has been uploaded before, your new provider will be able to access that data. This means they can spend less time taking down your history and spend more time treating you.

#### NC HealthConnex helps improve health care through:

- Better coordination between health care providers
- Fewer medical errors
- Improved patient safety and health outcomes
- Fewer repeat tests and procedures
- Less paperwork
- Reduced health care costs
- Faster identification and reporting of public health threats

# NC HealthConnex is a Secure, Private Network



The state entity operating NC HealthConnex - the NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) follows the highest information security standards available. Housed in the N.C. Department of Information Technology, information is always encrypted and sent over a private network when shared between NC HealthConnex and health care providers participating in the network.

NC HealthConnex is compliant with all federal and state privacy and security laws.

Information that identifies you will not be sold in any way or shared with anyone other than authorized health care providers or organizations that have entered into HIPAA-compliant, data-sharing agreements.

## What Does the NC HealthConnex Record Include?

Important information is included in your NC HealthConnex record:

- Medicines (prescriptions), allergies, lab and test results, image reports, conditions, diagnoses and vaccination history
- Demographic information

Not included in your health record:

- Substance abuse records or psychotherapy notes unless authorized by you, the patient



## Your Choices



You have the right to opt out of having your information shared between providers through NC HealthConnex.

Opting out of NC HealthConnex will not adversely affect your treatment by your physician, and you cannot be discriminated against if you decide to opt out.

If you change your mind about participating in NC HealthConnex, you can opt back in at any time by completing a new form.

Opt-Out forms are accessible via the NC HIEA website: [hiea.nc.gov/patients/your-choices](http://hiea.nc.gov/patients/your-choices). Your provider may also be able to provide a form to you.

Complete the form and mail it to:

**NC Health Information Exchange Authority**  
**Mail Service Center 4101**  
**Raleigh, NC 27699-4101**

**The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA)** operates North Carolina's statewide health information exchange - 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. It is housed within the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Government Data Analytics Center.





## NC HIEA Patient Information Brochure Order Form

The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) makes available tri-fold brochures to assist health care providers in educating patients about the benefits of participating in the state-designated health information exchange, NC HealthConnex, as well as their option to opt out of having their medical information shared.

PLEASE PROVIDE PATIENT EDUCATION ORDER INFORMATION IN THE BOX BELOW:

<b>Practice Name:</b> _____ <b>Date Requested:</b> _____
<b>Contact Name:</b> _____
<b>Shipping Address:</b> _____ _____
<b>Packages Requested</b> ( <i>100 brochures per package</i> ): _____ English _____ Spanish _____

IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL PRACTICE LOCATIONS AT WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE PATIENT EDUCATION MATERIALS DISPLAYED, PLEASE PROVIDE THAT INFORMATION IN THE BOXES BELOW:

*(If additional space is required, please attach an Excel file.)*

<b>Practice Name (if different from above):</b> _____
<b>Contact Name:</b> _____
<b>Shipping Address:</b> _____ _____
<b>Packages Requested</b> ( <i>100 brochures per package</i> ): _____ English _____ Spanish _____

<b>Practice Name (if different from above):</b> _____
<b>Contact Name:</b> _____
<b>Shipping Address:</b> _____ _____
<b>Packages Requested</b> ( <i>100 brochures per package</i> ): _____ English _____ Spanish _____

Please email completed form and any attachments to [hiea@nc.gov](mailto:hiea@nc.gov).



## N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority Patient Opt-Out Information

Updated 8/29/2023

The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) is operating North Carolina's Health Information Exchange, now called NC HealthConnex. NC HealthConnex is a secure, electronic network that allows participating medical providers to share your health information with one another. This enables participating physicians, hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies, and other health care providers to have access to important medical information about you that can assist them in making critical medical decisions for you.

### **Your Patient Record**

Your patient record in NC HealthConnex will include information about your medications, allergies, laboratory results, and other information gathered during your encounters from your health care provider. Your record will also include your demographic data to help identify you when you visit different health care providers across the state. It will not include any information about you that federal law prohibits sharing without your express authorization, like psychotherapy notes and substance abuse treatment records.

### **Benefits of NC HealthConnex**

What does it mean to be a part of the NC HealthConnex network? As a patient, it means having peace of mind in visiting a new health care provider's office if they are participating in NC HealthConnex. If your information has been uploaded before, your new provider will be able to access that data. This means they can spend less time taking down your history and spend more time treating you.

Participating in NC HealthConnex is even more important if you visit an emergency department at a participating hospital and you are unable to provide critical information about your current health status to hospital staff, including your diagnoses, medications, and allergies.

### **Who Can See My Record?**

Only participating health care providers and other HIPAA covered entities that have signed contracts with the NC HIEA will be able to access your medical information through NC HealthConnex. Your NC HealthConnex data may also be provided to third parties who have entered into contracts with the NC HIEA for limited purposes (i.e., the NC Department of Public Health for immunizations). These contracts ensure that all relevant privacy statutes and regulations are followed in how your health information is viewed, used, and shared. The NC HIEA also has the power to audit the use of patient information by each participating practice and each third party to ensure the law is being followed.

### **Right to Opt Out of NC HealthConnex**

You have the right to opt out of having your information shared between providers through NC HealthConnex. If you choose to opt out, please fill out the form on the following page and mail it to the NC HIEA. Opting out of NC HealthConnex will not adversely affect your treatment by your physician and you cannot be discriminated against if you decide to opt out. You can also use the form to rescind a previous opt out if you change your mind. However, your information may also be shared as required or permitted by law, for instance, for public health purposes.

Please note that the NC HIEA will only process opt out forms that are signed by adults over the age of 18. If you are under the age of 18 and have not gone through the legal process to become emancipated, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign the opt-out form.

If the information you provide to the NC HIEA on a Patient Opt-Out Form changes (for example your name or address changes) then you will need to submit a new Patient Opt-Out Form to the NC HIEA to ensure your opt out is applied to all of your information.

**The information presented is not legal advice and is not to be acted on as such, may not be current, and is subject to change without notice.**

**N.C. Health Information Exchange Authority  
Patient Opt-Out Form**

Please complete one box and the information requested below, and mail to:  
NC HIEA, Attn: **Opt-Out Processing, 4101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4101**

**Please include a return address on the mailing envelope.**

**Opt-Out: The NC HIEA may not share any of my health information.**

By completing and signing this form, I certify that I have been notified of the benefits of NC HealthConnex and of my right to opt out of having my data shared between participating health care providers through NC HealthConnex. I understand that if the information I provide on this Patient Opt-Out Form changes, then I will need to submit a new Patient Opt-Out Form with my current information to ensure my opt out is applied to all of my information. I also understand that my personal health information may be accessed and used in certain circumstances pursuant to HIPAA and NC law, such as reporting public health threats. **I understand that the information provided to me is not legal advice and I will hold the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority harmless for the direct or indirect consequences of my decision to opt out.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient or Parent/Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

**Rescind Opt-Out: I request to terminate my previous decision to opt out.**

By completing and signing this form, I am allowing my health information to be accessible to my health care providers through NC HealthConnex as permitted or required by North Carolina or federal law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient or Parent/Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

**Please complete all of the following fields for the patient who is requesting the opt-out or the opt-out rescission. Incomplete forms will not be processed.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name of Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sex

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

(\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Phone Number

(\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Phone Number

Please use the following fields to list previous addresses which may be required in order to positively identify your patient record in NC HealthConnex.

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Street Address

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City

State

Zip Code

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Street Address

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City

State

Zip Code