



Welcome Packet

North Carolina Health Information Exchange
Authority

Dear NC HealthConnex Participant,

On behalf of the entire NC HealthConnex team, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you as an NC HealthConnex participant.

To guide you in this process, we are providing this Welcome Packet which includes a wealth of information to facilitate employee and patient education about your upcoming connection to NC HealthConnex. Please take time to look through the materials and resources in this packet.

As you may know, North Carolina law requires pharmacists and other health care providers to educate patients on the benefits of the health information exchange so that their medical records can be made available where and when the patient needs it. The NC HIEA provides the materials listed below for your practice to incorporate into your patient education process.

Patient Education

- Fact Sheet
- FAQs for Patients
- Sample Notice of Privacy Practices
- Waiting Room Tri-Fold Brochure Order Form
- Opt-Out Form

We've also provided information that can help you educate your employees and patients about the connection that you will be building to the health information exchange.

Initial Announcement Tools

- NC HIEA Fact Sheet
- Talking Points to Educate Employees
- Talking Points to Educate Patients
- What to Expect During Onboarding

Go Live Announcement Tools

- Sample Senior Leader Email
- Sample Initial Email for CIO/CEO
- Sample Employee Newsletter Announcement
- Sample Press Release

Finally, now that the paperwork is done and you've moved into the technical onboarding process, it may be a good time to review the additional services available to your practice that can help you with care coordination as well as required state and federal reporting.

- Exchange Services – HIPAA-compliant health information sharing via a web-based clinical portal, via bi-directional integrations with EHR vendor systems and with neighboring states and federal agencies via the eHealth Exchange. Additionally, NC HealthConnex participates in the Civitas Networks for Health Patient Centered Data Home (PCDH), a network comprised of 45 HIEs across the country. Alerts are generated when a care event has occurred outside of the patient's "home" HIE and confirms the availability and the specific location of the clinical data. This enables providers to initiate additional data exchanges to access real-time information across state and regional lines and the care continuum.

- NC*Notify – A subscription-based service that notifies providers as their patients received services across the care continuum.
- Controlled Substance Reporting System – An additional pathway for providers to access the state’s prescription drug monitoring program, NC Controlled Substance Reporting System, and help combat the opioid epidemic in North Carolina. This integration allows providers to check prescription history prior to prescribing, per requirements in the STOP Act. The CSRS is accessible within the clinical portal.
- Promoting Interoperability and Meaningful Use – This is in place to help providers meet specific requirements and measures set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.
- Public Health Reporting – This includes the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System, NC Immunization Registry, and Electronic Lab Reporting. This tool is valuable for pharmacists as many patients seek vaccination through pharmacy services.
- Direct Secure Messaging – An encrypted email tool that allows you as a pharmacist to send Protected Health Information about a patient through a secure, encrypted network or to message providers with questions such as duplication of therapy.
- Training – The NC HIEA offers [training](#) for Clinical Portal use, DSM, and other HIE features through an [online series of modules](#) or in person by [request](#).

For more information about services provided by NC HealthConnex, visit our website at www.hiea.nc.gov/nc-healthconnex-suite-services.

If you have questions about the included material or if you would like to schedule additional training for your team, please contact our team at hiea@nc.gov or (919) 754-6912. We are pleased to offer a [series of on-demand online training modules](#) to help you and your practice get the most out of NC HealthConnex. To stay updated with timely NC HealthConnex trainings, events, and news please visit <https://hiea.nc.gov/news-events>.

Your connection brings us one step closer to achieving the NC HIEA’s mission of connecting health care providers to share health information safely and securely throughout North Carolina. As always, we welcome your feedback on materials contained within this packet or on NC HealthConnex once you begin utilizing the system. Feel free to contact me at Christie.Burris@nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Christie Burris

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Executive Director

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

Q. What is the NC HIEA?

A. The Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) was created to oversee and administer North Carolina's 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. North Carolina's state-designated HIE is called NC HealthConnex.

Q. How does the HIE benefit pharmacies?

A. HIE access can assist with [medication reconciliation](#). Pharmacists need access to [near real time information](#) like what can be provided via services like NC*Notify. HIEs allow pharmacists to connect the dots on disparate data from [different sources](#). While large, chain pharmacies exist across the country, if a patient utilizes a small, retail pharmacy, that pharmacy doesn't have access to that large chain's records, the HIE can help close the knowledge gap. This helps to ensure appropriate and timely patient care.

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 NC HealthConnex on a voluntary basis.

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

A. The information used to identify patients in the system is: name, date of birth, sex, address, and telephone number. The HIE uses the information to make accurate patient matches 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, provide electronic health information management services for busy pharmacies as well as hospitals and other practices is a common practice that gives your pharmacists timely access to the right information at the right time.

Frequently Asked Questions, p. 2

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

A. Only providers 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. 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 clinicians can see your complete record. Please let us know if you have questions and 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 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 might look at expanding 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 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.

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. 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.



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:

Practice Name: _____ **Date Requested:** _____

Contact Name: _____

Shipping Address: _____

Packages Requested: _____ **English** _____ **Spanish**
(100 brochures per package)

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.)

Practice Name (if different from above): _____

Contact Name: _____

Shipping Address: _____

Packages Requested: _____ **English** _____ **Spanish**
(100 brochures per package)

Practice Name (if different from above): _____

Contact Name: _____

Shipping Address: _____

Packages Requested: _____ **English** _____ **Spanish**
(100 brochures per package)

Please email completed form and any attachments to hiea@nc.gov.



North Carolina 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.



**North Carolina 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.

Street Address

City State Zip Code

Street Address

City State Zip Code

Street Address

City State Zip Code

Street Address

City State Zip Code

Street Address

City State Zip Code



La Autoridad de Intercambio de Información de Salud de Carolina del Norte (NC HIEA)
Formulario de Optar No
Actualizado 09/06/23

La Autoridad de Intercambio de Información de Salud de Carolina del Norte (NC HIEA) ahora conocida como el NC HealthConnex maneja el intercambio electrónico de información de salud del estado de Carolina del Norte. NC HealthConnex es una red electrónica segura que permite a los proveedores médicos participantes compartir su información de salud entre ellos. Esto permite a médicos, hospitales, laboratorios, farmacias y otros proveedores de la salud tener acceso a información médica importante sobre usted la cual puede asistirlos en la toma de decisiones médicas críticas.

Su Historial Clínico

Su expediente clínico en el NC HealthConnex incluirá información sobre sus medicaciones, alergias, resultados de laboratorios, y cualquier otra información recopilada durante sus visitas médicas. Su expediente también incluirá sus datos demográficos para ayudar a identificarlo cuando usted visite a otros proveedores de salud en todo el estado. Este expediente no incluirá información sobre usted que la ley federal prohíbe compartir sin su autorización expresa, como lo son notas de psicoterapia y registros de tratamiento de abuso de sustancias controladas.

Beneficios de la Red NC HealthConnex

¿Qué significa participar de la red NC HealthConnex? Como paciente, significa tener la tranquilidad de poder visitar la oficina de un nuevo proveedor de atención médica si este es participante de la red de NC HealthConnex. Si su información ha sido previamente enviada al sistema, su nuevo proveedor podrá acceder a sus datos inmediatamente. Esto significa que usted y su proveedor pueden dedicar menos tiempo repasando su historial médico y más tiempo en su tratamiento.

La participación en la red NC HealthConnex es de suma importancia si usted tiene que visitar una sala de emergencia de un hospital participante y no puede proporcionar información crítica sobre su estado de salud actual al personal médico, incluyendo sus diagnósticos, medicamentos y alergias.

¿Quién Puede Ver Mi Expediente Clínico?

Solo los proveedores de salud participantes y otras entidades cubierta por la ley HIPPA (por sus siglas en inglés) las cuales han firmado contratos con el estado de Carolina del Norte HIEA podrán acceder a su información médica a través de NC HealthConnex. Sus datos de NC HealthConnex también pueden proporcionarse a terceros que hayan suscrito contratos con el NC HIEA con fines limitados. (Por ejemplo, con el Departamento de Salud Pública de Carolina del Norte para el registro de inmunizaciones.) Estos contratos aseguran que toda información relevante a privacidad, estatutos y regulaciones son practicados en relación de cómo se comparte y examina su información de salud. El NC HIEA también tiene la facultad de auditar como se utiliza su expediente clínico por parte de cada participante y terceros; esto para asegurarse que su uso es conforme con la ley,

Su Derecho de No Participar de NC HealthConnex

Usted tiene el derecho de no participar del programa para que su información no sea compartida con otros proveedores a través de NC HealthConnex. Si usted decide no participar, llene el formulario en la página siguiente y envíelo a NC HIEA. La exclusión voluntaria de la NC HealthConnex no afectará negativamente su tratamiento médico y no puede ser discriminado si decide optar por no participar en el programa. Sin embargo, su información puede ser compartida como lo requiere o permite la ley, por ejemplo, para propósitos de salud pública.

Si usted es un menor de 18 años y no ha pasado por el proceso legal para ser emancipado, debe tener un padre o tutor legal para firmar el formulario de optar no.

Si la información que proporciona a NC HIEA en un formulario de optar no cambia (por ejemplo, su nombre o dirección cambia), deberá enviar un nuevo formulario a NC HIEA para garantizar que se aplique su exclusión voluntaria a toda su información.

La información presentada no es un consejo legal y no se debe actuar como tal, puede no estar actualizada y está sujeta a cambios sin previo aviso.



**La Autoridad de Intercambio de Información de Salud de Carolina del Norte (NC HIEA)
Formulario de Optar No**

Por favor de elegir la casilla apropiada, completar el formulario y enviar a:

NC HIEA, 4101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4101

Por favor, incluya una dirección postal de retorno en el sobre de correo.



Darse de Baja: NC HIE no puede compartir mi información de salud

Al completar y firmar este formulario, certifico que he sido notificado de los beneficios del intercambio de información de Salud de Carolina del Norte y de mi derecho de optar por no tener mis datos compartidos entre los proveedores de atención de la salud a través de la red de NC HealthConnex. También entiendo que mi información médica personal puede ser accedida y usada en ciertas circunstancias, de conformidad con la ley HIPPA y leyes de Carolina del Norte, tales como reportes de amenazas contra la salud pública. **Entiendo que la información proporcionada no es asesoramiento legal y no voy a mantener indemne a la Autoridad de Intercambio de Información de Salud de Carolina del Norte por las consecuencias directas e indirectas de no participar.**

Firma del Paciente o del Representante Legal Autorizado

Fecha

Nombre el letra de molde



Rescindir Darse de Baja: Solicito de que mi decisión anterior sea terminada.

Al completar y firmar este formulario, estoy permitiendo que mi información médica sea accesible a mis proveedores de cuidados de la salud a través de la red NC HealthConnex según lo permitido o requerido por el estado de Carolina del Norte o la ley federal.

Firma del Paciente o del Representante Legal Autorizado

Fecha

Nombre en letra de molde

Por favor complete todos los siguientes campos para el paciente que solicita la exclusión o rescisión de exclusión. Los formularios incompletos no serán procesados.

Primer Nombre del Paciente

Segundo Nombre

Apellido

Dirección Residencial

Ciudad

Estado

Código Postal

Fecha de nacimiento

Sexo

Correo Electrónico

(_____)_____
Teléfono Primario

(_____)_____
Teléfono Secundario

Dirección Postal

Ciudad

Estado

Código Postal

____/____/____
Fecha de nacimiento

Sexo

Correo Electrónico

(____)_____
Teléfono Primario

(____)_____
Teléfono Secundario

About NC HealthConnex

Your Health Care Provider Is Connected to the state-designated HIE
- NC HealthConnex - What You Need to Know

About NC HealthConnex

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 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.

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

[over]



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.

If you choose to opt out, please complete the “Opt Out” form accessible via the NC HIEA website: **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**

- 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.

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 (GDAC). **For more information:**

Web:
nchealthconnex.gov

Phone:
(919) 754-6912

Email:
hiea@nc.gov



North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA)

About the NC HIEA

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 state-managed Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) in 2015 to oversee and administer the NC Health Information Exchange Network, now called NC HealthConnex (NCGS 90-414.7). The NC HIEA is housed within the NC Department of Information Technology's (DIT) Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC).

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) connect to NC HealthConnex by certain dates to continue to receive payments for services provided. (NCGS 90-414.4)

Why Is NC HealthConnex Important?



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

This electronic conversation 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 arrangements that focus on value, NC HealthConnex gives health care 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.

NC HealthConnex Suite of Services

Exchange Services:

- Access a patient's longitudinal health record via a web-based clinical portal, single sign on or EHR integration
- Communicate PHI securely via Direct™ messaging
- Query neighboring state HIEs, and the VA/DoD via the eHealth Exchange network
- Check prescription history for controlled substances per the STOP Act

Notification Services:

- NC*Notify alerts providers in near real time as patients receive care in other care settings.
- Promotes timely follow-up on medications prescribed or other discharge instructions from ED or inpatient stay
- Provides notifications for chronic care management, high ED utilizers, diabetes diagnoses and more
- Supports continuity in care to reduce avoidable readmissions and achieve financial goals under value-based care contracts

Population Health/Analytics Services:

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



North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA)

Leadership & Stats

NC HIEA Advisory Board Members

Dr. William G. Way (*Chairman*)
Director of Diagnostic Imaging, Wake Radiology

Donette Herring (*Vice Chair*)
Chief Information Officer, ECU Health

Dr. Neal Chawla
Chief Medical Information Officer, WakeMed

Dr. Tammy Kiger
Physician, Carolina Family Health Centers

Brent Lamm
Senior Vice President and CIO, UNC Health

Dr. Richard Pro
Chief Data and Analytics Officer, Cone Health

Carolyn D. Spence
Chief Information Officer, Alexander Youth Network

Lauren Wiggs
Regional Sales Manager, Ontarget

Ex-Officio Members:

James Weaver, *Secretary and State CIO*
North Carolina Department of Information Technology

Kody Kinsley, *Secretary*
North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services

Carol Burroughs, *Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC) Director*
North Carolina Department of Information Technology

Dee Jones, *Executive Director*
North Carolina State Health Plan

Staff:

Christie Burris, *Executive Director*
North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority

Michael Crist, *Assistant Director*
North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority

NC HealthConnex, By the Numbers:

- 60,000+ providers with contributed records
- 8,000+ health care facilities submitting medical records including primary care, county health departments, FQHCs, skilled nursing, free and charitable clinics, behavioral health, and 140 hospitals
- 4M+ notifications delivered monthly via NC*Notify
- 11M+ unique patient records
- 80 EHRs
- 20 border and interstate HIEs connected
- 150M+ continuity of care documents (CCDs)



Learn more at nchealthconnex.gov

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Initial Talking Points

These talking points should be used to educate and assist staff when speaking about the NC 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 NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) – provides a secure, statewide network for pharmacists, doctors and other health care providers in North Carolina to share important patient health information and improve patient care.

The Need

- Pharmacists and other 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 pharmacy information systems (PIS) remains specific to our network and leaves gaps in patient care.
- Providers need the ability to see the medications patients have been prescribed to understand the best course of treatment to help eliminate drug-drug interactions.
- As North Carolina strives to improve state-funded health care, it has identified the value that 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 and PISs) to be available securely whenever pharmacists, 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 such as prescriptions, allergies, vaccinations, lab results, X-rays, test results, conditions and diagnoses.
- NC HealthConnex is available to all providers and is required of any provider receiving state-funded health care. (NCSL 2015-241 as amended by NCLS 2020-3 s. 3E.1)

Talking Points, p.2

Efficiency

- North Carolina is taking a comprehensive approach to treating Medicaid patients and making it more efficient and effective for the 1.8 million 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 HIEA

- 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, providing transitions of care and medication reconciliation.
- 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 an HIE in an emergency department reduces the odds of hospital admission,¹ and access to an HIE reduces hospital readmissions² and repeat diagnostics like imaging.³
- NC HealthConnex also helps prevent the spread of disease through faster reporting of health threats to public health departments.
- Access to NC HealthConnex helps providers understand patient medication compliance.

What You Can Expect from this Connection

- We are currently working to connect our pharmacy system to NC HealthConnex and anticipate going live in [month of anticipated go-live].

Talking Points, p.3

- 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.

Patient Education

- Patients do not have to participate in this system and can choose to opt out of having their PHI shared through NC HealthConnex by sending the Patient Opt Out Form, found on the NC HIEA website, 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]**.

1 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>

2 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>

3 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>

WHAT TO EXPECT

Navigating through the NC HealthConnex connection process

STEP 1

Submit Participation Agreement

Our team will process your agreement and place your organization in the queue for connection. Find [detailed instructions for completing the participation agreement](#).

STEP 2

Executed Participation Agreement & Welcome Packet

Our team will return your organization's executed participation agreement along with the NC HealthConnex Welcome Packet to begin the onboarding process.

STEP 3

Suite of Services Enabled

Full participants can request access to the NC HealthConnex clinical portal by contacting the NC HealthConnex SAS Help Desk at HIESupport@sas.com. For any other services, please contact the NC HIEA at HIEA@nc.gov.

STEP 4

Training and Patient Education

The NC HIEA offers multiple training opportunities, either virtually or on-site, as well as free patient education brochures. To request training, please submit the Training Request Form.

STEP 5

SAS Technical Discussions

Our team members, including our technical partners at SAS will reach out to you to start a technical kick-off. SAS will work directly with your EHR vendor throughout development to connect your organization.

STEP 6

Keep in Touch

Throughout onboarding, it's vital that your organization's point of contact maintain consistent communication with our technical team. This will be imperative to ensure your connection is completed successfully.

STEP 7

Go Live

Once your organization's technical connection is complete, you will receive an email announcing your connection to NC HealthConnex is live, and providers will begin to see your organization's data in the clinical portal.

STEP 8

Ongoing Support

We and our partners at SAS are here to help. Throughout the entire lifecycle of your connection, including post-connection, we can assist your health care organization in using this tool for improved patient care. Reach out to the NC HealthConnex provider relations team at HIEA@nc.gov or the SAS Help Desk at HIESupport@sas.com for assistance.

Have questions? The NC HIEA has answered some of the most frequently asked questions about participation in NC HealthConnex and how to connect. Visit [our website](#) to find answers to these questions and what it means to participate in the state health information exchange.

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Go Live Talking Points

***Instructions:** These talking points are 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 North Carolina health information exchange, NC HealthConnex, is operated by the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) housed within the N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT).
- NC HealthConnex provides a secure, electronic network (computer-based) that will facilitate a conversation between your pharmacists and health care providers, allowing them to access and share health-related information statewide. No matter where you are, your 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 is available to all providers and is required of any provider receiving state funds to provide health care (NCSL 2015-241 as amended by NCLS 202-3 s. 3E.1).
- 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 such as prescriptions, immunizations, lab and test results, image reports, conditions, diagnoses and 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 pharmaceutical information will automatically be included in NC HealthConnex's 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

Talking Points, p. 2

HealthConnex record. A number of organizations have already started using NC HealthConnex.

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. 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 Health Connex, 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.
- Opt-Out Forms are available on the NC HIEA website at <http://hiea.nc.gov/patients> and also [insert where in your office forms are located].

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Go Live Employee Email

***Instructions:** This is a sample email to send a couple weeks before “go live” to educate your employees about 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 utilize NC HealthConnex in care and treatment of patients. The person on our staff in charge of setting up NC HealthConnex participant user accounts is [insert name]. [He/She/They] 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 site](#).

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

Thank you,
[Leader name]

NC 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 2015-241, as amended by NCLS 2020-3 s. 3E.1, that requires pharmacies who receive state funds for the provision of medical services to submit claims 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
- 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 such as 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.

Thank you,
[Leader name]

NC 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 increasingly imperative. That is why we are working to connect our electronic medical record system with North Carolina's state-designated health information exchange – NC HealthConnex.

Operated by the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) housed in the North Carolina Department of Information Technology, 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 NC HIEA 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 providers are 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, secure manner. This is especially important in emergency situations when waiting for a fax or email is often out of the question.

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 receive safe, integrated, 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 can take several months depending on the technological configuration requirements. During that time, we will keep you apprised of the status of this project. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact [desired contact].

NC Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) Sample Press Release

***Instructions:** Please coordinate the release of this with the NC HIEA Executive Director Christie Burris (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 such as drug allergies, prescriptions, medical conditions, and lab and test results with other health care providers with whom the patient has a relationship. This technology is available through [Organization's] partnership with the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA), housed within the North Carolina Department of Information Technology.

"We're very enthusiastic about this partnership," said [Chief Medical Officer or another 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."

NC HIEA's secure network – NC HealthConnex – provides a critical connection for North Carolina providers, enabling the exchange of patient and medical records among more than 60,000 providers, 7,000 medical facilities, 140 hospitals and 20 interstate exchanges. NC HealthConnex is available to all providers in North Carolina and is required for providers who receive state funds for the provision of health care services such as Medicaid and the State Health Plan. 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 all of a patient's other health care providers that participate. 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 healthcare costs.

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

Press Release, p. 2

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

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 and quality of care and to 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 Jan. 1, 2023.

For more information about the NC HIEA, visit nchealthconnex.gov.

-END-

[Organization Communications Contact Information]

Media Contact NC HIEA:
Christie Burris
christie.burris@nc.gov
(919) 480-0067