



What Psychiatrists Need to Know About...

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NC Health Information
Exchange Authority

NC HealthConnex
Powering Health Care Outcomes

Having knowledge of a patient's complete medical record at your fingertips can not only help you, it can improve diagnoses and treatment as well as save time and money.

Benefits of Connection

North Carolina's state-designated health information exchange (HIE), NC HealthConnex, helps bridge the gap between behavioral health/IDD providers and other providers with whom they share patients. With 3.9 million unique patient records and over 850 connected facilities and growing, NC HealthConnex links disparate systems and existing HIE networks together to deliver a holistic view of a patient's record. It will allow you to access your patients' comprehensive records across multiple providers, as well as review consolidated lists of labs, diagnoses, allergies, medications and more.

In the general hospital system/primary care environment it is easy to recognize the advantages of accessing a patient's medical record—decreased redundancy of labs and other diagnostic testing; more efficient diagnoses, recommendations and treatment; and improved coordination of care. From a psychiatrist's perspective, where physicians are working to "reattach" the head to the body and dispel stigma about mental illness as well as understand the intersection of all the

systems of the body, NC HealthConnex will provide an invaluable conduit to the clinical information psychiatric physicians may need in assessing and treating your patients, and in providing collaborative coordination of care with your medical colleagues.

The NC HIEA understands the importance of patient confidentiality and is working on technical and consent management strategies that are sensitive to the special confidentiality standards that exist in treating mental illness. In fact, the Authority formed a Behavioral Health Work Group more than a year ago, of which the NCPA is an active member, to provide an educational forum for behavioral health/intellectual disability disorder providers, industry trade organizations, state agency partners, and vendors to work together in a collaborative environment. The group meets quarterly and is working to inform a connection strategy to "onboard" behavioral health providers to NC HealthConnex as well as develop use cases for the integration of physical and behavioral health. If you are interested in learning more about this work group, please email: hiea@nc.gov.

"We have been pleased that the NC HIEA has been receptive to feedback expressed by NCPA and the mental health community and has met with our Joint Insurance Committee several times in the past year

to gain greater understanding of members' concerns," says Robin Huffman, NCPA Executive Director.

Additionally, NC HealthConnex is working on a pilot for clinical notifications. These notifications will allow you to receive alerts when your patients have touched the health system, such as a visit to the ED.

So, how do you connect? The first step is to sign a Participation Agreement with the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA), a state agency that manages NC HealthConnex. There is no cost from the NC HIEA to sign up or connect and use NC HealthConnex. (Note: There may be vendor costs to the Participant, but this varies by EHR vendor.) The Participation Agreement requests that Electronic Health Records/Electronic Medical Records (EHRs/EMRs) are minimally capable of sending HL7 messages, version 2.0 and higher to enable the technical connection and data submission to NC HealthConnex. There are then two ways to access patient records: via the Clinical Portal (a web-based portal), or through your EHR directly (if the EHR is capable of bidirectional integration).

Additional benefits of NC HealthConnex include:

- Efficient access to comprehensive patient records at the point of care

- Elimination of duplicative tests
- Improved coordination across levels of care
- Improved diagnoses and treatment plans
- Access to secure, encrypted email through Direct Secure Messaging
- Access to public health registries
- Access to a directory of over 16,000 provider DSM addresses
- HIPAA-compliant, automated sharing with other providers

State Requirements – What Does the Law Mandate?

All North Carolina providers are eligible to connect and reap the benefits of NC HealthConnex. And, if you receive state funding for the provision of health care services, you must connect by certain dates in 2018 as required by state law.

Specifically, per changes to the law in the 2017 Appropriations Act:

- Hospitals as defined by G.S. 131E-176(3), physicians (licensed to practice under Article 1 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes), physician assistants and nurse practitioners who provide Medicaid services and who have an electronic health record shall connect by June 1, 2018. This deadline also includes practices that employ or include physicians, physician assistants, and/or nurse practitioners. All three criteria should be met in order to fall under this deadline.
- All other providers of Medicaid and state-funded services shall connect by June 1, 2019.
- LMEs/MCOs are required to submit claims and encounter

data by June 1, 2020.

Additionally, the General Assembly directed the NC HIEA, in partnership with DHHS and the State Health Plan, to conduct a feasibility study that will consider the following with respect to health care providers who fall under the mandate but who do not have the technology to connect:

1. The availability of connection, exchange, and data submission standards established by the Office of the National Coordinator for Information Technology within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
2. The adoption of national standards for the connection, exchange, and data submission standards by provider type.
3. Cost estimates by provider type to connect and submit data to the HIE and any availability of federal or State funds to meet connection or submission requirements.
4. Data captured in the treatment of patients, segmented by provider type.
5. Activity of other states and payor plans with respect to the establishment of an HIE Network.
6. Alternatives

to the connection and submission of demographic, clinical, encounter, and claims data through the HIE Network.

The results of the study will be presented to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology at the beginning of the legislative short session.

Conclusion

The NC HIEA works directly with its technical partner, SAS Institute, to continually audit, strengthen and optimize the HIE. This helps to ensure the highest levels of patient security, data security and participant satisfaction.

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LIFE AWAITS.....



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APA is Moving!



As of January 2, 2018, APA will once again be located in Washington, D.C., after being housed in Arlington, Va., for the past 15 years.

Here is the new address and telephone number:

800 Maine Avenue, S.W., Suite 900,
Washington, D.C. 20024

Phone number: (202) 559-3900

(APA's toll-free numbers remain

unchanged:
888-357-
7924 or
888-35-PSYCH)

Please note that APA will be closed from December 21 to January 1 while the move is under way. It will be back to business as usual on January 2.

In anticipation of the end of APA's lease on its current headquarters, APA's Board of Trustees reviewed a number of real estate options and voted in August 2015, to move back to D.C. Trustees selected the location on Maine Avenue because of the favorable terms APA was offered and its proximity to the U.S. Capitol and other agencies and organizations with which APA interacts on a regular basis. The building

is part of a new development called The Wharf that features many state-of-the-art amenities that are not only eco-friendly but also cost-efficient.

"When APA members are in Washington, D.C., we hope they will stop by the new headquarters and visit their professional home," said APA Medical Director and CEO Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. "I am very proud of a special room that we designed specifically for members' use—a 'home away from home' in which they can work or relax when in town for leisure or business. Members will also be able to view wall panels that recount APA's history and the history of psychiatry in America and visit the Rare Books Room, where some of APA's treasures will be on display."[†]

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Over the next two years alone, the NC HIEA expects to connect a majority of the state's health care providers to NC HealthConnex. With access to this breadth of patient data in a consolidated, usable format, imagine the effect these benefits will have on your practice and daily patient care.

The NC HIEA is committed to its vision of linking all North Carolina health care providers, enabling participants to access information to support improved health care quality and outcomes. Let's work together as we all strive to continue to improve health care in our

state. For more information, visit NCHealthConnex.gov.

About the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and NC HealthConnex: In 2015, the North Carolina General Assembly established a state-managed Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) to oversee and administer the NC Health Information Exchange Network (NCGS 90-414.7). Housed within the NC Department of Information Technology's (DIT) Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), the NC HIEA operates North Carolina's statewide health information exchange--now called

NC HealthConnex. NC HealthConnex is a secure, standardized electronic system in which providers can share important patient health information. The use of this system promotes the access, exchange, and analysis of health information to help improve care coordination, quality of care, and enable better health outcomes.[†]