

Update: Health Information Exchange Plan & Consent Implementation

Jenney Samuelson, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Vermont Health Access

Emily Richards, Health Information Exchange Program Director, Department of Vermont Health Access

Maurine Gilbert, Consultant, Department of Vermont Health Access

Andrea De La Bruere, Client Services Director, VITL

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Objectives

1. Deliver an update on consent implementation activities that have occurred since the last update to the Board (November)
2. Illustrate how current efforts will continue to serve the purpose of educating Vermonters about their rights as they relate to sharing of health records and the mechanisms for “opting out”
3. Provide details about how the HIE Plan has been updated and will be continually used to support the new consent policy

Implementation Plan: 3 Workstreams

- 1. Stakeholder engagement** for implementation strategy development;
- 2. Mechanisms to implement and manage consent** for the VHIE; and
- 3. Evaluation** of the success of stakeholder engagement objectives.

Brief Look at the Workstreams

- **Stakeholder Engagement / Communications Development**
 - Interviews and focus groups conducted with advocates and special populations.
 - Developed communications approach and key messages based on stakeholder input
 - Small Mammal, an external communications agency, developed friendly, accessible language and design, applied across website, social content, brochure, and more
- **Mechanisms to Implement Consent Management**
 - Assessed workflows and needed policies and technologies to manage consent at VITL.
 - Developed training for hotline staff at VITL and the Office the Health Care Advocate.
 - Engage providers in what the change in policy means to them.
- **Evaluation**
 - Established a stakeholder informed evaluation committee who supported the development of an evaluation plan.

Stakeholder Engagement: Work Completed Since November

- ✓ The public education campaign is launched and new tactics will be released routinely until March 1.
- ✓ Advocacy organizations and other partners have started to deliver messages about consent using the initial communications products.
- ✓ Completed training with staff at the Office of the Health Care Advocate, training has been offered and is available to other advocacy organizations.

Stakeholder Engagement: Next Steps

- January, February and Beyond:
 - **The consent website is live** - it will continue to act as a tool to educate and provide Vermonters with support
 - The **Communications Toolkit** has been distributed to advocates and posted online (includes social media, etc)
 - **Advocates** have been/will be briefed on how to use communications tools and engaged in sharing the consent message
 - **Provider materials** are complete and out for print
 - **Hotlines** at VITL and the Office of the Health Care Advocate are up and running
 - **Front Porch Forum** posts have started and at least 3 more are anticipated
 - **Media** is anticipated to begin in February
 - **Listening for feedback, ongoing improvement of tactics**

So what is the Vermont Health Information Exchange?

The Vermont Health Information Exchange keeps your health records in one secure place. When you see a doctor or healthcare provider who participates, an electronic record may be sent to the Information Exchange. This record is ready for the next doctor you see so they know your health history. This doctor adds to your record so it's ready for the next doctor, and so on. It puts your providers on the same page.



What's that mean for me?

Having your doctors and healthcare providers on the same page means better care for you. When providers use the Information Exchange, one record is shared across the state. This means you won't have to answer



PARTICIPATE

If you want the benefit of all your providers having your medical record you have nothing to do. Starting March 1st, if your providers participate, your records will be shared on the Information Exchange.

Do nothing

What's on my record?

Your record has basic information stores medications, allergies and tests you get during a doctor visit are also for doctors to see.

WHEN DOES THIS START?

The Information Exchange is used only see your records if you've signed up for doctors to see your records. If you've signed up for doctors to see your records and your information shared, you have



GET MORE INFORMATION BEFORE YOU DECIDE

Your doctor or healthcare provider can answer all your questions about the Information Exchange. Or you can call the Information Exchange hotline.

888-980-1243



DON'T PARTICIPATE

You can choose to not have your records shared with providers. This is called opting out. If you opt out, your record will be stored in the Exchange. But your providers will not be able to see it, except in emergencies. You can opt out by filling out this form, or by calling the VITL hotline at 1-888-980-1243

Fill Out Form

Stakeholder Engagement: Next Steps

- Public Hearing – an opportunity to discuss frequently asked questions about the VHE and consent policy implementation strategies
 - When: February 4, 2020, 10:30am -12:00pm
 - Where: Waterbury State Office Complex, Cherry Conference Room

Mechanisms to Implement and Manage Consent: Work Completed Since November

Focused on increasing awareness of the Vermont Health Information Exchange, offering easy opt-out options for Vermonters, and reducing burden on health care organizations.

Educational Resources:

- Vermont Health Information Exchange Hotline (888-980-1243) – Available
- Office of the Health Care Advocate – Available
- Sample Notice of Privacy Practices - Available
- Participating Health Care Organizations – Available
- Patient Consent Brochures – Available
- Patient Consent Website – Available

Mechanisms to Implement and Manage Consent: Next Steps

Easy Opt-Out Options for Vermonters:

- Participating Health Care Organizations – Available
- The Vermont Health Information Exchange Hotline at 888-980-1243 – Available
- Online Form – Available
- Download, print and fill out a paper opt-out form and mail, deliver in person or fax it to VITL – Available

Reducing the Burden on Health Care Organizations:

- VITL is collecting and maintaining a record of consent decisions
- Health care organizations can educate and refer patients to VITL or the Health Care Advocate
- VITL and other health care stakeholders will be involved to help answer questions and increase awareness

Evaluation: Work Completed Since November

- Convened the evaluation committee - Vermont Department of Health, the Disabilities Council, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Vermont Medical Society, Bi-State Primary Care Association, and Vermont Care Partners - to finalize guiding questions for the evaluation.
 - *Are Vermonters aware of their ability to decide whether their health care providers can see their health information available in the VHIE?*
 - *Do Vermonters have enough information to make a decision, with which they are comfortable, about whether their health care providers can see their health information available in the VHIE?*
 - *Can Vermonters easily register their decision to not allow their health care providers to view their health information available in the VHIE?*

Evaluation: Work Completed Since November

- Fielded the patient experience survey, including questions regarding consent - received 11,112 survey responses

The next two questions ask about your knowledge of the Vermont Health Information Exchange. The Vermont Health Information Exchange may electronically collect information about the health care you receive. You can choose whether your health care providers can see this information.

Have any of your health care or other service providers asked you whether you want your health care providers to be able to see your health information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange?

Did you get enough information to feel comfortable deciding whether your health care providers will be able to see your health information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange?

Evaluation: Next Steps

- February: Plan for next year's Patient Engagement Survey and confirm additional opportunities to collect evaluation data
- Convene the evaluation committee every other month to monitor and continue evaluation activities
- Continue to field evaluation questions where possible
- Report on evaluation findings in the 2021 HIE Plan

Consent in the HIE Strategic Plan

- The HIE Plan has been updated with the following:
 - *Addendum to Health Information Exchange Plan: Protocols for Provider Access to Protected Health Information on VHIE*
 - Intended to replace the current policy (2014)
 - Crafted to represent the intent of Act 53 of 2019 and cover topics accounted for in the current policy
 - Additional documentation on the Connectivity Criteria, previously shared with the GMCB
- The 2021 HIE Plan update will include the results of the evaluation and related strategic plans as designed by the HIE Steering Committee

Consent in the HIE Strategic Plan

Section 1 – Purpose

Upon approval by the Green Mountain Care Board, this addendum shall be incorporated into and become part of Vermont’s Health Information Technology Plan (the “Plan”). Vermont law requires that the Plan include standards and protocols for the implementation of an integrated electronic health information infrastructure for the sharing of electronic health information among health care facilities, health care professionals, public and private payers, and patients. In particular, 18 V.S.A. § 9351(a)(3)(B) requires that:

The Plan shall provide for each patient's electronic health information that is contained in the Vermont Health Information Exchange to be accessible to health care facilities, health care professionals, and public and private payers to the extent permitted under federal law unless the patient has affirmatively elected not to have the patient's electronic health information shared in that manner.

This addendum is intended to give effect to that provision.

As required by statute, Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc. (“VITL”) has been designated to operate the Vermont Health Information Exchange (“VHIE”) in accordance with standards and protocols that are consistent with those adopted under the Plan.

Notwithstanding the annual review and approval of the HIE Plan as a whole, these Protocols shall remain in effect for the existence of the VHIE until superseded or modified with approval of the Green Mountain Care Board.

Consent in the HIE Strategic Plan

- Topics Covered in the Addendum -
 - Provider Access
 - Patient Education
 - Provider Responsibilities
 - VITL Responsibilities
 - Patient Access to PHI
 - Emergency Access to PHI on the VHIE
 - Patient Request for Audit Report
 - Revocation
 - Substance Abuse Treatment Information

Reference Slides

Stakeholder Engagement: A Look at Work with the Advocates

- Interviews and focus groups were completed with advocates and members of these groups, with the objective of:
 - Informing advocates about the VHIE and the new opt-out consent policy;
 - Understanding each population's current understanding of and perspectives on health data sharing including benefits and risks;
 - Engaging members of these populations in conversation via interviews or focus groups;
 - Enabling advocacy organizations to be messengers and possibly processing opt-out decisions for members of the populations they serve;
 - Developing a shared definition of success regarding the rollout of the opt-out consent policy.

Stakeholder Engagement: A Look at Work with the Advocates

- A few themes emerged in discussions with advocates for special populations and from previously mentioned advocacy organizations representing the general population including:
 - A shared understanding that a multi-channel communications approach that relies on a wide range of messengers and mediums will have the best chance of reaching Vermonters.
 - Most advocacy organizations interviewed committed to participating as messengers.
 - There were differing opinions as to whether a mailing to every Vermont household would be an effective method of communicating the key messages. Many advocates indicated that it may be prohibitively expensive, yield poor outcomes, and be invasive to individuals' privacy.
 - Some advocacy organizations representing special populations recognized the unique risks of health information exchange to the people they represent and/or unique challenges in communicating with them about the Vermont Health Information Exchange and their rights while also recognizing that they may experience more benefit from effective health information exchange than members of the general public.
 - Some advocacy organizations have cautioned that messaging about the Vermont Health Information Exchange must be carefully designed to not create fear or uncertainty. Potential sources of fear cited include confusion that this impacts health insurance. Advocates noted that when individuals encounter messaging, they should understand that no action is necessary and that they will continue to receive high quality care regardless of the decision they make about sharing their records.

Learning from Vermonters

- Little current knowledge of health information sharing rules and practices
- Health information is personal, privacy matters – especially to people from communities that have been marginalized or with conditions that have been stigmatized.
- Agreement that more information = better care
- Hope that health information exchange can help relieve the administrative burden of personal health information management
- With attention and a little time, Vermonters can understand the Vermont Health Information Exchange and their rights and options. The challenge will be capturing attention and creating clarity in less time.