

Health Data Consent Policy Update on Evaluation July 2020

Lead: Mary Kate Mohlman, PhD
Blueprint for Health
Department of Vermont Health Access

Consent Policy Evaluation Committee

- Purpose of the Evaluation Committee:
 - Act 53 2020, § 5.a(6) Identify a methodology for evaluating the extent to which the public outreach regarding the VHIE, consent policy, and opt-out processes has been successful.
 - Providing feedback on data sources, methods, and analysis

- Members:

Heather Skeels and Kristen Bigelow, BiState

Emma Harrigan, VAHHS

Jessa Bernard, Vermont Medical Society

Kirsten Murphy, Vermont Disabilities Council

Patrick Kinner, Vermont Department of Health

Eric Schultheis, Health Care Advocate's Office

Simone Rueschmeyer, Vermont Care Partners

Baseline Analysis

Two questions were added to the 2019 Patient Experience survey (CAHPS Survey) administered by DVHA to assess respondents' awareness and knowledge of the VHIE consent policy for sharing information with providers. See below:

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 [your child] receive[s]. 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?

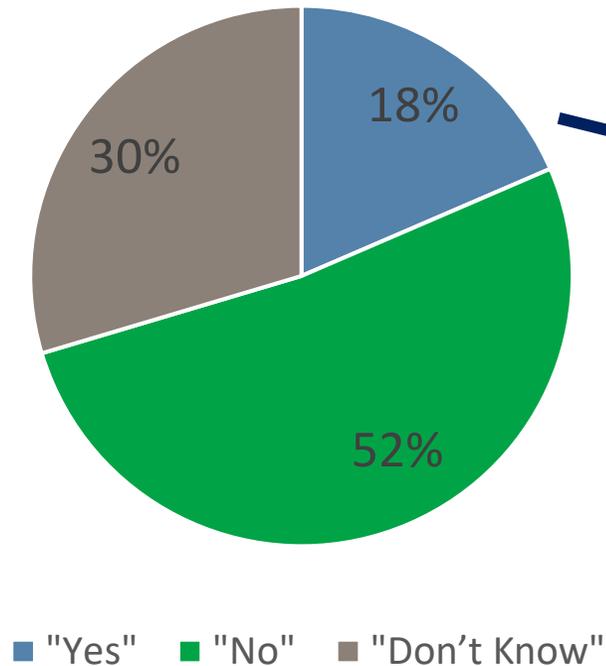
- Yes
- No, Go to Question 29
- Do not know

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?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

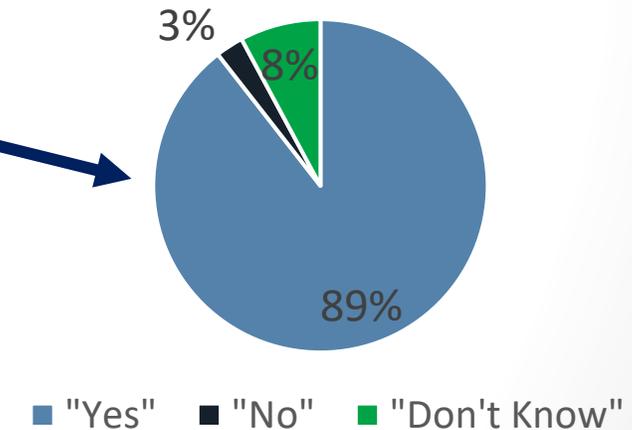
Results for VHIE Consent Policy Patient Experience Survey Questions: Based on 11,112 Responses (20.6 Response Rate)

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?

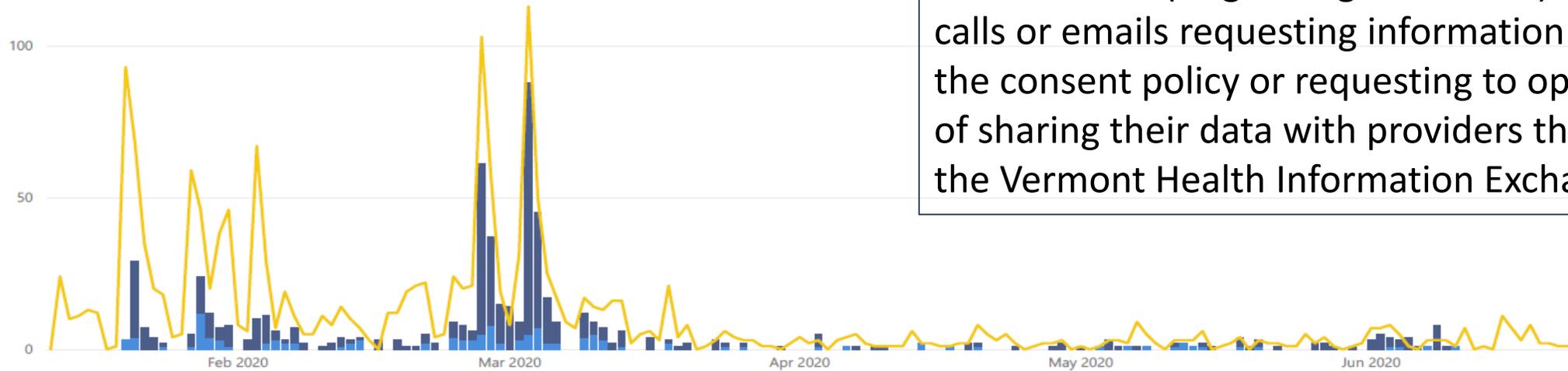
Of those who answered "Yes" to Question 1



Timeline of Educational Outreach by the State and VITL and Inquiries to VITL

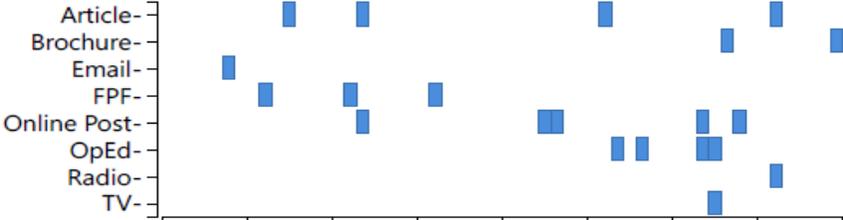
Inquires made to VITL by Type and Date

● VITL - Request for Info ● VITL - Request to Opt Out ● Visits to VITL Site - US



The timelines layout the educational outreach by the state and VITL and the inquiries VITL has received (e.g., visits to their website (originating in the U.S.) and calls or emails requesting information about the consent policy or requesting to opt out of sharing their data with providers through the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

Informational Outreach by Date and Type



Brochure = Mailings of brochures to health care organizations
 Email = Email communication with stakeholders
 FPF = Front Porch Forum posts
 Online Post = posts made on social medial or organizations' websites

Inquiries to VITL

From Jan. 12 to June 22

Month	Visits to VITL Site - US	VITL - Request for Info	VITL - Request to Opt Out
January	523	29	72
February	549	42	165
March	409	36	200
April	74	6	14
May	72	10	22
June	81	4	27
Total	1708	127	500

*Numbers in column are not mutually exclusive, meaning a single individual could be represented in all three data columns

Summary of Findings To-Date – Patient Experience

- Baseline Data:

- Based on the 2019 Patient Experience Survey, a small minority of respondents had been asked about whether they wanted to share their information with their providers through the Vermont Health Information Exchange.
- However, for those who had been asked, the vast majority had received enough information to make a decision with which they were comfortable.

Summary of Findings To-Date – Outreach Campaign

- Impact of Outreach:

- Vermonters have responded to outreach through the educational campaign supported by the state and VITL
- However, we will need to continue monitoring level of inquiries to understand impact of COVID-19 and the need for additional outreach
- Limitation: We don't know what we don't know, meaning we do not know whether the relatively low numbers of inquiries to VITL are due to a lack of awareness or to substantial support for sharing one's health information with their providers through the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

- Implications:

- Additional sources of data on Vermonters' awareness need to be identified
- Ongoing outreach is likely to be needed for continued awareness and education

Next Steps

- Include VHIE Consent Policy Questions in 2020 Patient Experience Survey (Planned to administer October/November of 2020)
- Continue to monitor rate of inquiries to VITL (i.e., calls, emails, visits to website, etc.) relative to outreach and media reports
- Identify additional sources for data collection

Challenges Due to COVID-19

- Patient Experience Survey: Anticipated lower sampling numbers due to fewer primary care provider visits over survey period (March to August)
- Fewer available survey or focus group opportunities due to funding limits or social distancing needs

Outreach Update on the Consent Project

July 2020

Opt-Out Consent Policy Implemented

Policy took effect March 1

- Smooth transition of all undecided patients to opt-in status, maintaining all previous consent decisions
- VITL now processing consent decisions via phone, website, mail, fax (this was previously the responsibility of health care organizations).

More patient data available

- As of December 2019, 47.9% of Vermonters had provided opt-in consent
- As of March 31, 2020 ~ 1.5% of Vermonters had opted-out of data sharing
- Providers can now count on finding their patients when they query the VHIE, and VITL has seen robust use of the provider portal, even with the reduction in health care visits resulting from the pandemic.

Patient Education & Outreach Launch

Outreach from January – March drove engagement

- Offered practices tools to support their education of patients
- Direct outreach to Vermonters via Front Porch Forum, VPR sponsorship
- Partners helped spread the word via social and websites
- Op-ed in Vermont and local newspapers
- Press release with story picked up by WCAX Healthwatch and VT Digger
- Clear spikes in website traffic, calls to hotline, following outreach events (see evaluation slides for more)

Ongoing Patient Education & Outreach

Paused outreach in April for COVID-19, based on expectation that individual bandwidth for health care related information would be fully occupied by COVID.

Considering relaunch of outreach in early fall

- Looking at radio to expand reach.
- Will continue to use FPF and encourage social sharing.
- New messages and new content, including [a video](#) simply explaining the VHIE

Looking for opportunities to encourage more practice-to-patient education, this is the information source patients prefer. First step is sharing a new flier for use with telehealth patients and in portals - with translation in 7 languages.