



Vermont Health Information Exchange Frequently Asked Questions

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Vermont Health Information Exchange Frequently Asked Questions

1 WHAT IS THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

1.1 WHAT IS THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

The Vermont Health Information Exchange keeps health records in one place. Most Vermonters have a health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, that is made up of information about their health and the health care they have received from different doctors and at different practices and hospitals. Doctors and other health care providers can view information about the patients in their care who are participating in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. This shared health record can help put providers on the same page.

2 WHAT INFORMATION IS IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

2.1 WHAT INFORMATION IS IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Participating health care organizations (for example: doctors' offices and hospitals) choose what information they will send to the Vermont Health Information Exchange. A patient's record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange may contain information including, but not limited to:

- Patient demographics - like name, age, date of birth, address
- Problems and conditions
- Allergies
- Medications
- Laboratory test results
- Radiology reports
- Transcribed reports
- Patient care summaries

2.2 DOES THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE CONTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH?

Some mental health information is in the Vermont Health Information Exchange and some is not:

- Records about mental health care received at some primary care practices, emergency departments, and hospitals may be included, and may include diagnoses and prescribed medications.
- Vermont's Designated Agencies ([list of Designated Agencies by county and region](#)) do not send information to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.
- Private psychiatrists and mental health counselors do not send information to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

2.3 IS INFORMATION ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (ALSO CALLED ADDICTION) IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Some information about substance use disorder is in the Vermont Health Information Exchange and some is not:

- Information about substance use disorder treatment received at some primary care practices, emergency departments, and hospitals may be included, and may include diagnoses and prescribed medications.
- A law called 42 CFR Part 2: Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records prohibits some federally funded substance use disorder treatment providers from sharing treatment information through the Vermont Health Information Exchange. In Vermont that includes Designated Agencies ([list of Designated Agencies by county and region](#)) and “Hubs” for opioid use disorder treatment ([map of “Hub” treatment centers](#)), which do not send information to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.
- Recovery centers ([list of recovery centers](#)) do not send information to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

2.4 DOES MY DOCTOR OR PROVIDER SEND INFORMATION TO THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

The best way to find out if your provider sends information to the Vermont Health Information Exchange is to call VITL, the organization that operates the Health Information Exchange, at 888-980-1243

2.5 ARE LAB RESULTS AND OTHER TEST RESULTS IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Yes, laboratory results, reports about medical visits, and radiology reports are in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. They may be included if the laboratory or health care organization where the test was conducted sends information to the Health Information Exchange or if the provider who ordered the test receives information from the Vermont Health Information Exchange.



2.6 IS MEDICATION AND PRESCRIPTION INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Yes, medications that have been prescribed and prescriptions that have been filled are included in the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

The information about medication and prescriptions that is in the Vermont Health Information Exchange comes from doctors and providers and from a network of pharmacies, mail order pharmacies, clearing houses, insurance claims, and Surescripts.

The Vermont Health Information Exchange is not linked to the Vermont Prescription Monitoring System (VPMS).

2.7 ARE NOTES IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Yes, there are some notes in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. These include notes from health care providers health records that are part of patient care summaries, radiology reports, and transcribed reports.

2.8 HOW FAR BACK DOES INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE GO?

The oldest information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange is from 2011, when it started collecting information from the first partner organizations.

2.9 IS THERE INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE FROM OTHER STATES?

Some information from other states is available in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, including:

- Information about care received at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center
- Information from the VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs)

3 ACCESS AND PRIVACY

3.1 WHO CAN VIEW INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Health care providers can view the medical records of their patients. These providers may include:

- medical doctors
- medical staff
- pharmacists
- care managers
- dentists



- mental health providers
- home health care nurses
- physical therapists
- other health care professionals covered under HIPAA.

A smaller selection of non-medical information is available to authorized administrative staff in health care organizations. This includes information like name, date of birth, and address.

3.2 CAN I SEE MY INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

The Vermont Health Information Exchange does not currently have a patient portal. A patient may request that their complete health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange be mailed to them. Patients should contact the VITL hotline at 888-980-1243 for more information.

3.3 CAN I PICK WHICH OF MY PROVIDERS CAN SEE MY INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE (I.E. ALLOW SOME OF MY PROVIDERS TO VIEW AND BLOCK OTHERS)?

No, a person can either choose to participate and give all of their current and future health care providers permission to access their health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, or choose to opt-out and stop any health care provider from accessing their health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, except in the case of a medical emergency.

3.4 HOW DOES THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE MAKE SURE PEOPLE DON'T ACCESS INFORMATION THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

VITL, the organization that operates the Vermont Health Information Exchange, uses three core strategies to ensure that individual medical records in the Health Information Exchange are only accessed by health care professionals for purposes of providing care.

- 1) VITL has a training program for participating health care organizations, detailing appropriate use of the Vermont Health Information Exchange.
- 2) VITL ensures that there are warnings and notifications in place to remind users about appropriate use.
- 3) VITL has established an auditing program to identify potential misuse of the system. This includes routine audits of user activity in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. Each and every emergency record access request is audited.

3.5 CAN THE PEOPLE WHO WORK AT VITL VIEW INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Yes, but only in order to test and troubleshoot the system, some VITL employees may need to view limited amounts of information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. Employees of VITL accessing the system must have an established need under the “health care operations” consideration of HIPAA. All VITL employees are given training on patient privacy, HIPAA, and minimum necessary access to patient information.

3.6 CAN MY INSURANCE COMPANY SEE MY INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Health insurance companies may use data from the Information Exchange to check the quality of health care you've received.

3.7 CAN MY EMPLOYER SEE MY INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Employers do not have access to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

3.8 CAN PROVIDERS IN OTHER STATES VIEW MY HEALTH INFORMATION, FOR INSTANCE IF I AM TRAVELING OR LIVING OUT-OF-STATE?

Providers outside of Vermont do not have access to VITL Access, the provider portal to the Vermont Health Information Exchange. However, some information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange is shared with out-of-state providers through other systems. This sharing happens with:

- The VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs)
- Providers in Vermont can review national prescription information but not vice versa
- National qualified event notification systems that notify providers when a patient is admitted, transferred or discharged from care, or has experienced a significant health event.

3.9 CAN PROVIDERS EVER ACCESS HEALTH INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE FOR PATIENTS WHO HAVE OPTED-OUT?

Yes, in the event of a medical emergency where a provider believes their patient is experiencing a condition that poses an immediate threat to their health and cannot provide consent, they may access their patient’s health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. This is called a “break the glass” record search and it is allowed even for patients who have opted-out. Break the glass events are rare and each time



they occur VITL performs an audit to ensure the access was appropriate. The patient or their legal representative must be notified of this access as soon as reasonably possible.

4 SECURITY

4.1 HOW IS INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE KEPT SECURE?

VITL, the organization that operates the Vermont Health Information Exchange, uses several strategies to ensure data in the Information Exchange is secure, including adherence to national security protocols like the NIST Cyber Security Framework. Additionally, all information in the Health Information Exchange is compliant with HIPPA privacy protections.

- All information sent to or by the Vermont Health Information Exchange is encrypted.
- The Vermont Health Information Exchange systems are all physically located in secure datacenters.
- VITL monitors the use of the Health Information Exchange. All VITL staff and staff at partner organizations are trained to identify and report security incidents. Unusual or malicious events are reviewed and addressed.

5 HOW DO I...?

5.1 IS THERE A CHANGE IN HOW PEOPLE SIGN-UP TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Before March 1, 2020, you are required to “opt in” by signing up to participate to have your health information shared on the Health Exchange.

After March 1, 2020, you will be automatically signed up to participate in the Health Information Exchange unless you choose to “opt out” and not have your health record viewed. Starting March 1, 2020, the Vermont Health Information Exchange will switch from an opt-in consent policy, meaning your providers can only see your record in the Health Information Exchange if you sign-up to participate, to an opt-out consent policy, meaning your providers can see your health record unless you choose not to have your record viewed.

5.2 IF I PREVIOUSLY SIGNED-UP TO PARTICIPATE AND ALLOW MY PROVIDERS TO SEE MY HEALTH RECORD IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE, WILL THAT DECISION BE HONORED AFTER MARCH 1, 2020?

Yes, anyone who previously signed-up to participate in the Vermont Health Information Exchange will continue to participate after March 1, 2020.

5.3 IF I ALREADY OPTED-OUT, DO I HAVE TO OPT-OUT AGAIN?

Any adult who previously opted-out of sharing their health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, does not have to opt-out again. They will continue to be opted-out of participating in the Health Information Exchange.

Any opt-out decisions made prior to a person's eighteenth birthday will expire on their eighteenth birthday, at which point they will begin participating in the Health Information Exchange and have the choice to opt-out again.

5.4 HOW DO I KNOW IF I'VE ALREADY SIGNED-UP TO PARTICIPATE OR IF I HAVE ALREADY OPTED-OUT?

To check on your current status in the Vermont Health Information Exchange you can call the Vermont Health Information Exchange Hotline at 888-980-1243. Or, you can inquire with your health care provider to see if your information is being shared.

5.5 HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY PROVIDERS CAN SEE MY INFORMATION / HOW DO I MAKE SURE I'M IN?

If you have already signed-up to participate in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, your health record in the Health Information Exchange will continue to be available to your providers after March 1, 2020. If you have not previously made a decision, your health records will automatically be available in the Vermont Health Information Exchange beginning March 1, 2020. To check on your current status in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, you can call the Vermont Health Information Exchange hotline at 888-980-1243.

5.6 HOW DO I STOP MY PROVIDERS FROM SEEING MY INFORMATION / HOW DO I OPT-OUT?

There are several ways to opt-out of having your information viewable to your providers in the Vermont Health Information Exchange:

- Some health care providers can help you opt-out
- Call the [Vermont Health Information Exchange Hotline] at 888-980-1243
- Fill out an online form at vthealthinfo.com



- Download, print, and fill-out a paper opt-out form and mail it to VITL, Attention: VHIE Support at 1 Mill Street, Suite 249, Burlington, VT 05401 or fax it to 802-651-4208

5.7 HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT INFORMATION ABOUT ME IS IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

To request a copy of your health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, fill out and submit the record request form at vthealthinfo.com.

5.8 HOW CAN I SEE WHO HAS VIEWED MY INFORMATION IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

You can request an audit report, showing every Vermont Health Information Exchange user who has accessed your record. To request the audit, fill out the record audit request form at vthealthinfo.com.

5.9 IF I AM PARTICIPATING, CAN I OPT-OUT LATER? IF I AM OPTED-OUT, CAN I CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE LATER?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time.

5.10 HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION? WHERE CAN I GO TO ASK QUESTIONS?

More information can be found online at vthealthinfo.com or by calling the Vermont Health Information Exchange Hotline at 888-980-1243. Some providers may also be able to answer questions about the Vermont Health Information Exchange. Also, the Office of the Health Care Advocate is available at 1-800-917-7787. They are not involved with managing the Health Information Exchange and can help answer any questions you would prefer to talk through with a third party.

6 WHAT HAPPENS IF I OPT-OUT?

6.1 WILL I STILL RECEIVE CARE IF I OPT-OUT?

Yes. Signing up with the Vermont Health Information Exchange is not required to receive high quality care. A provider cannot deny you care based on your decision about participating in the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

6.2 HOW WILL MY PROVIDERS ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT ME IF I OPT-OUT?

If you opt-out of participating in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, your providers will continue accessing information about your health and health care the same way they have in the past. This may involve some combination of electronic medical records, fax, and phone.

6.3 HOW LONG DOES AN OPT-OUT DECISION LAST?

Opt-out decisions last forever unless you choose to revoke opt-out, which can be done using the revoke opt-out form that can be downloaded at vthealthinfo.com.

Any opt-out decisions made prior to a person's eighteenth birthday will expire on their eighteenth birthday, at which point they will begin participating in the Health Information Exchange. At that point they may do nothing and continue participating or may choose to opt-out again.

6.4 IF I OPT-OUT, IS MY INFORMATION REMOVED FROM THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

No. Opting-out stops healthcare professionals involved in your care from viewing your health record in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, but that information is not removed from the Health Information Exchange and may still be available in the event that you experience a medical emergency.

7 OTHER QUESTIONS

7.1 WHO OPERATES THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL) is a private, non-profit organization that operates the Vermont Health Information Exchange. More information about VITL is available at www.vitl.net.

7.2 IF THERE IS SOME INFORMATION ABOUT ME IN THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE THAT IS WRONG, HOW CAN I GET IT CORRECTED?

The best way to correct any incorrect information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange is to contact the health care organization that originally sent the data to the Health Information Exchange. The Vermont Health Information Exchange hotline 888-980-1243 can offer more information about your options.

7.3 IS THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE PART OF / RELATED TO THE HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE?

No, the Vermont Health Information Exchange is not related to Vermont Health Connect or any health insurance exchange.

7.4 CAN I USE THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE TO TRANSFER MY RECORDS IF I CHANGE PROVIDERS?

You can request a copy of your records available in the Vermont Health Information Exchange by requesting a record request form. Once you have obtained your record you can share it with your providers.



7.5 WHERE DO I GO IF I HAVE A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT ABOUT THE VERMONT HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE?

There are several options for asking questions and raising concerns about the Vermont Health Information Exchange:

- Call the Vermont Health Information Exchange Consent Hotline at 888-980-1243.
- Call VITL at 888-980-1243 and request to speak with the Director of Client Services.
- Call the Office of The Health Care Advocate 1-800-917-7787 - the Office of the Health Care Advocate is a free resource to help Vermonters solve problems related to health care and is independent of the Vermont Health Information Exchange.