

News About the Vermont Health Information Exchange, Patient Options, and Providers' Role | October 2019

About the Vermont Health Information Exchange and VITLAccess

The Vermont Health Information Exchange, operated by Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL), aggregates patient health records from practices and hospitals across Vermont. Most Vermonters have information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange, including records of their health and the tests and care they have received from multiple providers. Providers can view information about their patients in the Vermont Health Information Exchange by logging into the provider portal, VITLAccess, and seamlessly through some electronic health records.

Patients' Choices

In March 2020, the Vermont Health Information Exchange will become an "opt-out" system – each Vermonter's information will be viewable to their treating providers unless they have actively opted-out. Health information will remain in the system. Patients who choose to opt-out are opting out of their treating providers viewing their health records in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. There will be several ways to opt-out, including calling the VITL hotline or telling staff at a practice or hospital that has agreed to transmit this information to VITL.

Providers' Role – Education

The Department of Vermont Health Access and VITL are asking health care organizations (practices, hospitals) to educate patients about their options by having a brief conversation at check-in and providing a brochure. Patients expect to hear from health care organizations about how their health care information is being used.

Practices may also choose to insert a paragraph in their HIPAA / notice of privacy practices paperwork.

The script, printed brochures, sample privacy practices paragraph, and an FAQs document will be part of a toolkit provided by the Department of Vermont Health Access and VITL in early 2020. The toolkit will also include resources for organizations that want to share information about the Vermont Health Information Exchange in their newsletters, social media, and other communications channels.

Providers' Role – Processing Opt-Outs

Organizations that currently collect electronic patient consent (opt-in and opt-out) will continue to collect opt-out decisions and send that information to VITL. Organizations that do not process consent will refer patients to the VITL hotline. The people at the VITL hotline can also answer patient questions.

More Details

More information will be shared with health care organizations and providers in late 2019 and early 2020. A patient-education campaign will also launch in 2020, including a website with more information for patients. In the meantime, please contact Andrea De La Bruere, Director of Client Services, Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL) 802-861-1800 | Clientservices@vitl.net with any questions.

Current State (opt-in) VHIE Patient Consent Collection	Future State (opt-out) VHIE Patient Consent Collection Effective March 1, 2020	Benefits for Health Care Organizations
<p>Patient information is contained in the VHIE but is not viewable to treating providers unless a patient provides written permission, or in the event of a medical emergency. Approximately 42% of Vermonters have provided consent at this time.</p>	<p>Patient information is contained in the VHIE and is viewable to treating providers unless a patient chooses to opt-out. Opted-out patients will only be viewable in the event of a medical emergency.</p>	<p>Patients often desire and expect their information will be shared among health care organizations. VITL anticipates that after March 1, 2020, approximately 95% of patient records will be available to view via the VHIE to support health care organizations in their efforts to make informed decisions about their patients.</p>
<p>Patients can opt-in or opt-out of having their information viewable in the Vermont Health Information Exchange (VHIE) only at participating health care organizations.</p>	<p>Patients can easily opt-out of having their information viewable in the Vermont Health Information Exchange (VHIE) in multiple ways –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 888-980-1243 • Participating health care organizations • Fax • VITL website • USPS • MyVITL ticket • In-person 	<p>VITL is expanding opportunities for patients to easily opt-out of the VHIE, reducing the burden on health care organizations to collect, set, and keep a record of consent.</p>
<p>Organizations that collect consent must keep a record of the consent decision and set consent status via a web-based portal or send the decision to VITL electronically.</p>	<p>Organizations can participate in collecting consent in multiple ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations that collect electronic patient consent may continue to collect it and send it to VITL • Organizations can provide information on consent to their patients and refer them to the hotline 888-980-1243 in order to capture their consent decision • VITL is responsible for keeping a record of consent decisions 	<p>The burden on health care organizations will be significantly reduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VITL will collect and maintain 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
<p>VITL provides patient education brochures and other materials about the VHIE to participating health care organizations.</p>	<p>VITL will provide the following information for as many Vermont health care organizations and residents as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated patient education materials • Dedicated website pages with patient centric content • A Consent Hotline 	<p>Health care organizations will not be solely responsible for educating their patients about the VHIE. Health care organizations should direct their patients to contact VITL or the Health Care Advocate for more information about the VHIE.</p>
<p>Via notarized forms, patients can contact VITL to request audits of information available about them in the VHIE as well as a record of who has accessed their information in the VHIE.</p>	<p>Via notarized forms, patients can contact VITL to request audits of information available about them in the VHIE as well as a record of who has accessed their information in the VHIE.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
	<p>Patients that have previously chosen to opt-out prior to March 1, 2020 will remain in an opt-out status after the change.</p>	<p>Patient privacy and previous consent choice will be maintained.</p>