

## Provider Frequently Asked Questions From Patients

### 1) Who is the Hawai'i Health Information Exchange (Hawai'i HIE)?

The Hawai'i Health Information Exchange (Hawai'i HIE) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2006 by leading healthcare stakeholders in Hawai'i for the purpose of improving health care delivery through seamless, effective, and secure health information exchange.

### 2) What is "health information exchange" or "HIE"?

Health information exchange (HIE) is the electronic transfer of individuals' protected health information (PHI) among different providers and organizations involved in the care of patients and in the interests of public health. HIE may improve the efficiency and reliability of communication among health care providers. For example, a secure electronic system for exchanging PHI can be used to replace phone conversations, mailing of paper records, and fax transmissions.

### 3) What are some of the benefits of HIE to Hawai'i residents?

- HIE allows physicians, hospital staff and other health care providers to have comprehensive information about a patient available where they need it, when they need it.
- Improves coordination of care for a patient among various doctors and health care providers.
- Eliminates repetitive tests and unnecessary procedures.
- Provides the opportunity for better medication management and avoids the cost associated with harmful drug events.
- Improves communication among those involved in a patient's care
- Patient's PHI is shared in a way that is more secure than paper-based files, faxes and mail.

### 4) Why is HIE important?

There are indications that the costs of health care in the United States have escalated to an unsustainable level, while the quality of care is below the level that it should be. In Hawai'i, 13 percent of the state economy is allocated to health care, and on average health care expenditures in Hawai'i increase by 6.2 percent annually. National research shows there are nearly 100,000 medical errors annually and 30 percent of health care costs are unnecessary. HIE helps improve the quality of care and reduces costs.

### 5) What is the Health eNet? What does it mean when the Hawai'i HIE says it's partnering with Medicity to implement the health information exchange or Health eNet?

The Health eNet suite of services is all of the products and services offered by the Hawai'i HIE including but not limited to the Community Health Record, Referrals Module, Secure Messaging, Public Health Reporting, Immunizations Reporting, and Health Information Technology Consulting.

The Health eNet Community Health Record is a secure, encrypted electronic system used to exchange and access clinical information, such as patient's medical history, laboratory results, medications,

diagnosis, procedures and demographic information. The Health eNet utilizes products provided by vendor Medicity, a leading U.S. developer of HIE software services.

The Health eNet currently allows healthcare providers to exchange information in three ways:

1. A provider can send a secure message or a patient referral to another provider. For example: a primary care physician can electronically refer a patient and transmit encrypted information about the patient to a specialist.
2. A provider can access necessary health information about a patient contributed by multiple providers using a single search (i.e. “query”) of the Health eNet. For example: an emergency physician can query the Health eNet to quickly obtain information needed to administer life-saving procedures and medications.
3. A provider can use the Health eNet to exchange information about multiple patients for healthcare and public health related purposes. For example, the Hawai'i Department of Health collects information about communicable diseases through the Health eNet that may adversely impact the community as a whole.

#### **6) What type of information is collected by the Health eNet?**

The Health eNet has the ability to electronically and securely exchange patient information, including:

- Admission and Discharge Notes
- Medications
- Lab results
- Referrals
- Radiology reports
- Immunizations
- Allergies

#### **7) Who has access to health information through the Health eNet?**

Only health care providers and organizations providing treatment to patients may apply to use the Health eNet. When the Hawai'i HIE accepts a provider practice or organization as a Health eNet participant, only certain individuals identified by the participant are granted authorized access to the system.

#### **8) How does the Hawai'i HIE keep records private and secure?**

The Hawai'i HIE uses a combination of technology, documented procedures and sound business practices to safeguard PHI stored in and exchanged via the Health eNet. For example, we employ:

- Encryption, firewalls and redundant data storage (i.e. data available via a secondary secure location in the event the primary data source fails) to protect data; and
- Electronic audit trails and review procedures in cooperation with our participants to track user activity within the system and ensure the system is only used for authorized purposes.

#### **9) How do I know if my health care provider is a participant in the Health eNet?**

Simply ask your provider. Providers who contribute information into the system are responsible for notifying their patients that they are participating in the Health eNet. When you visit a participating

provider you may receive a notice about your provider's participation in the Health eNet, which may be a part of the provider's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Notice of Privacy Practices.

**10) Is my health care information sitting on the Internet for anyone to see?**

No. The Hawai'i HIE and its participating providers take the privacy and security of your PHI very seriously. Health care providers are only allowed to access the Health eNet system using a secure login, and transmission of your information is encrypted. Providers are also only allowed to access your information if they have a treatment relationship with you, or are establishing a treatment relationship through a referral from another one of your providers.

**11) What if I don't want my providers to have access to my health information? Can I elect not to have my information shared through the Health eNet?**

We understand that individuals may have concerns about the privacy and security of their electronic PHI. Under HIPAA, an individual has the right in most cases to request restricted access, use or disclosure of his/her PHI. Also the Hawai'i HIE provides an "Opt-Out" process so an individual can choose to block the ability to query his/her PHI on the Health eNet.

**12) What happens if I choose to Opt-Out?**

After consulting with your provider, if you choose to "Opt-Out", the Hawai'i HIE will make technical changes that block the ability of participating providers to access your PHI via the Health eNet query system. Please keep in mind that:

- Any PHI queried prior to processing an Opt-Out request may still be used by participating providers and other healthcare professionals involved in your care; and
- Going forward, providers will not be able to access your PHI — and while an emergency room physician, for example, has a right to access your information to provide life-saving care, if you Opt-Out he/she would not have ready access your PHI via our system to help you.

The information will be stored in our system, but will remain unavailable to participants unless you later choose to "Opt-Back-In".

To Opt-Out or Opt-Back-In, individuals are required to complete the appropriate form. These forms may be downloaded from the Hawai'i HIE website ([www.hawaiihie.org](http://www.hawaiihie.org)).

**13) How do I get access to my own medical records?**

The Hawai'i HIE will respond to an individual's request to access his/her medical record, or other PHI, by referring the individual to his/her physician. The Hawai'i HIE is unable to provide the individual with direct access to his/her records stored in the Health eNet. To make the request, individuals should go directly to their physician for their medical record.

**14) Can I request changes to my health record or other information included on the Health eNet?**

Yes, you can request revision and corrections to your health records by talking with your healthcare provider who is the owner/creator of the record in question. The Hawai'i HIE does not alter your health information in any way: the HIE simply provides a method to privately and securely transport health information from one provider to another.

**15) What about sensitive health information, such as psychiatric records and substance abuse treatment?**

If information about a patient is subject to regulatory restrictions of access, use and disclosure, healthcare providers utilizing the Health eNet generally must obtain written authorization from the patient before transmitting such information to another Health eNet participant. Types of restricted information include:

- Psychotherapy notes that are separated from the rest of the individual's medical record, as defined by HIPAA; and
- Patient information maintained by alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs, as defined by federal public health regulations concerning confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse treatment records.

These types of information are not part of the general medical records of a patient. Health care providers participating in the Health eNet are required not to transmit restricted information to the Hawai'i HIE for storage in and access via the Health eNet.

Information embedded in the general medical records of a patient's health care provider may be disclosed by the provider without a written authorization.

**16) Does the Hawai'i HIE share my health information with employers?**

No. The Hawai'i HIE does not share health information with any employers. Additionally, the HIPAA Privacy Rule prohibits healthcare providers and plans from disclosing personal health information to employers without a patient's express, written authorization.