



Direct Secure Messaging Giving Providers the Ability to Securely Exchange Health Care Data

What is Direct Secure Messaging?

Direct Secure Messaging is a way to exchange health care data via an internet-based tool with national encryption standards. Direct Messaging was developed as a standards-based means for health care providers to communicate electronically while ensuring the security of Protected Health Information. It functions as an encrypted email system for health care data.

*Direct is a national encryption standard for securely exchanging clinical healthcare data via the Internet. It is also known as the **Direct Project**, **Direct Exchange** and **Direct Secure Messaging**. It specifies the **secure**, scalable and standards-based method for the exchange of Protected Health Information (PHI).*

Why should our organization use Direct Secure Messaging?

Direct technology improves coordination of care between health care providers and their patients by providing the ability to communicate with other health care providers securely. Instead of mailing or faxing your patient's information which could take from hours to days and is not secure, Direct Secure Messaging provides you the ability to send or seek information about your patient's health record within minutes. Direct Secure Messaging allows clinicians timely clinical details and helps to address the significant gaps in information that occur during transitions of care. These are just a few ways that Direct Secure Messaging can be used:

- Transitions of Care (CCD, CCD-A documents)
- Lab Tests/Results
- Referrals
- Reports

How do I get access to a Direct Secure Messaging Account?

All NC HealthConnex Participants including but not limited to specialists, care team members, skilled nursing, and dentists can utilize Direct Secure Messaging. If you are a Participant of NC HealthConnex, you can use this feature at no cost. NC HealthConnex leverages Orion Health, a global company that provides the NC HealthConnex clinical portal, as its Health Information Service Provider (HISP) to provide these solutions. What's more, Orion is an accredited member of Direct Trust allowing you access to send and receive messages from anyone else in the country that is a member. Your Direct Secure Messaging account can either be integrated into your EHR or be utilized through the NC HealthConnex clinical, web-based portal. *[Additional fees incurred for EHR integration.]*

How does Direct Secure Messaging fit into my workflow?

NC HealthConnex Participants have the option of using DSM Web or XDR products. DSM Web users access this messaging service via a secure login with their internet browser. DSM XDR, is a DSM service that is integrated within the EHR of the Participant, allowing users to stay within their EHR workflow to send messages.

How do I know the direct address of providers I refer to/ need to send patient information to?

The North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) offers its Participants a Provider Directory which contains over 16,000 HISP address within the state of North Carolina. This Provider Directory is provided to participants as a .csv file for your organization's use in the coordination of care through Direct Secure Messaging. The addresses are also in the NC HealthConnex DSM web interface for clinical portal users.

Does Direct Secure Messaging help me meet Meaningful Use?

Meaningful Use Stage 2 Criteria requires that health care organizations and providers must meet data transfer requirements using Direct Messaging. These requirements can be demonstrated with Electronic Health Records that comply with the ONC's 2014 Edition EHR Certification Criteria which specifies electronic exchange of transition of care records with Direct Messaging.

Interested in obtaining more information on Direct Secure Messaging or how to obtain an account? Please contact us at hiea@nc.gov or by telephone at 919-754-6912.

About the North Carolina Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) and NC HealthConnex:

In 2015, the North Carolina General Assembly established a state-managed Health Information Exchange Authority (NC HIEA) to oversee and administer the NC Health Information Exchange Network (NCGS 90-414.7). Housed within the NC Department of Information Technology's (DIT) Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), the NC HIEA operates North Carolina's statewide health information exchange--now called NC HealthConnex. NC HealthConnex is a secure, standardized electronic system in which providers can share important patient health information. The use of this system promotes the access, exchange, and analysis of health information to help improve care coordination, quality of care, and enable better health outcomes.