

## Participation in the Alaska HIE

Participation in health information technology (HIT) and data sharing in Alaska is voluntary.

The choice you make will not affect your ability to access medical care. If you believe the risks of HIT outweigh the benefits, you may choose to opt out or not participate.

You should understand that when you opt out, your medical information will not be available to help participating physicians manage your care, even in an emergency. Your choice is personal and will only be shared with your provider.

When you opt out, all of your health information will be removed from the system and only enough demographic information will be kept to make sure that no health information about you is added to the system. This means that if you choose to opt in at a future date, there will be no access to past information.

If you are unsure if you wish to participate, you can choose partial opt out. This means that your health information is stored in an encrypted file and will only be accessed in an emergency, such as an ER visit. The emergency doctor will be given a decryption key to view your data and will be required to answer a question about why the record is being accessed.

Information about access is stored with your health record and you can request this information by contacting the Alaska eHealth Network at (866) 966-9030 or by visiting [www.ak-ehealth.org](http://www.ak-ehealth.org).



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# What is the Alaska Health Information Exchange?

The Alaska Health Information Exchange (HIE) is the electronic sharing of health-related information.

The ability to exchange health information electronically is the foundation of efforts to improve health care quality, safety and efficiency in the United States.



The Alaska eHealth Network is an organization that manages the electronic sharing of health-related information between electronic health record (EHR) systems in Alaska. This is done through a secure, encrypted data exchange using standards developed specifically for health care. The only person who can access and view your data is your physician or their designated staff. Insurance companies can also see a subset of the data that applies to their billing.



Sharing health information electronically eliminates the need for faxing, copying and hand-carrying your health record from provider to provider.

Nationally, electronic Health Information Exchanges (HIE) have resulted in:

- Faster and more effective emergency treatment
- Greater patient satisfaction
- Improved public health disease reporting
- Avoidance of duplicate testing, negative drug interactions and allergic reactions

## How does the HIE work?

When you have an encounter with a provider, information about your visit is securely stored on the Alaska HIE and is visible only to providers that have a relationship with you.

For example, if you are referred by the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) to see a provider at another HIE participating facility for further treatment (and vice versa), your ANMC providers will have the ability to access important health information such as your medications, diagnosis, problem lists and a clinical care summary provided by the referred provider.

This two-way communication improves the continuity of your care.

## How is my health information protected?

The Alaska HIE utilizes the highest technology security standards available in the industry today to protect your health information.



Data will never be provided to anyone other than your provider or your insurer. This is the same reporting that currently occurs with your paper health information by fax or mail. Electronic transfer allows your data to be transferred securely and provides you with an audit of where your data has been sent.

Your health information is also encrypted into a type of language that can only be translated, or decrypted, by someone who has the authority to do so. Every time your provider accesses your personal health information, an audit trail is recorded. This type of accountability provides an additional layer of security for your health information.

There are federal and state laws regarding who can access your data. These laws permit access to health data only for treatment and payment.

## How is my health information used?

Whether it's on paper or in an EHR, there won't be any difference in how your health information will be used or shared. Just like your health information in the paper record, your health information in the EHR is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule.

Under this rule, your health information can be shared with:

- Other doctors and hospitals for treatment purposes
- Insurers for billing purposes
- State and federal health reporting agencies (such as immunization and cancer registries), as required by law

It's also important to understand that your health information can't be given to your employer, used for sales or advertising, or used for other purposes without your signed permission.

An EHR provides a digital version of the paper file you see at the doctor's office. When an EHR is connected to all of your health care providers, it gets your health information quickly and accurately into the hands of people who need it.

You may opt in or opt out of the Alaska HIE at any time. Whichever you choose, your selection is confidential and will not affect your ability to access medical care at ANMC.

