

Vermont Health Information Exchange and VITL Overview

March 2024



About VITL

- VITL operates the Vermont Health Information Exchange, in accordance with Vermont Statute 18 V.S.A. § 9352:

(c)(1) Health information exchange operation. VITL shall be designated in the Health Information Technology Plan approved by the Green Mountain Care Board pursuant to section 9351 of this title to operate the exclusive statewide health information exchange network for this State. The Plan shall determine the manner in which Vermont's health information exchange network shall be managed. The Green Mountain Care Board shall have the authority to approve VITL's budget pursuant to chapter 220 of this title.

- Nonprofit organization founded in 2005
- Board members represent hospitals, health care providers, health technologists, payers, and businesses across Vermont

What is Health Information Exchange?

- Health information exchange (HIE) encompasses two related concepts:
 - Verb: The appropriate and confidential electronic exchange of clinical information among authorized organizations
 - Noun: An organization with agreed-upon operational and business rules that provides services to enable the electronic and secure sharing of health-related information
- Electronic exchange of clinical information allows doctors, nurses, pharmacists, other health care providers, and patients to access and securely share a patient's vital medical information electronically — improving the speed, quality, safety, coordination, and cost of patient care.

Source: The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology

What VITL Does

- **Collects, matches, and standardizes** patient data in real time from health care providers caring for Vermonters to create one longitudinal record for each person in the Vermont Health Information Exchange
- **Serves as a hub** for efficient data sharing, eliminating the need to build and maintain multiple point-to-point connections
- **Protects patient data** through robust security practices and ensuring appropriate access to data
- **Makes data available** to inform:
 - Patient care
 - Quality improvement
 - Health care reform
 - Public health activities
 - Population health initiatives
 - Case management

VITL Participants

	Contribute Data	Access Data
Hospitals <i>includes all Vermont hospitals and a border hospital, along with their inpatient and ambulatory services, emergency departments, and owned specialty and primary care practices</i>	16	16
Vermont Federally Qualified Health Centers	11	10
Independent Specialty and Primary Care Practices	31	63
Home Health Agencies	5	7
Nursing Homes and Long-Term Care Facilities	0	5
Pharmacy Chains and Independent Pharmacies	11	1
Laboratories (State and Commercial)	14	0
Departments of the State of Vermont	2	3
Designated Mental Health and Specialized Services Agencies	0	11
Emergency Medical Services	0	48
Payers	0	2

The Data in the Vermont Health Information Exchange

- Admission, discharge, and transfer (ADT) messages
- Laboratory results
- Radiology reports
- Transcribed reports – including many types of notes
- Immunization messages
- Home health monitoring data
- Continuity of Care Documents (CCDs)
- Death Registry Data

Accessing VHI Data

150 organizations use VITL's data access services.

Data is available through:

- The **VITLAccess clinical portal**, accessible by web browser
- **Delivered into electronic health records**
 - Currently delivering laboratory results, radiology reports, and transcribed reports
 - Under development: APIs and SMART on FHIR to deliver more data types directly into EHRs or to in-EHR apps
- **Event notification**
- **Custom reporting and analytics**

VHIE Data Delivery

Data contributors benefit from the delivery of their data, via the Vermont Health Information Exchange, to a variety of stakeholders. This streamlines required data submission and reporting for providers and informs public health and population health efforts. Data is delivered to:

- Other clinicians and organizations that provide care
- Vermont Department of Health
- OneCare Vermont
- Vermont Blueprint for Health
- Vermont Chronic Care Initiative

How Vermonters' Data is Shared

- Data sharing is governed by the Services Agreements between VITL and organizations that contribute and use data, by VITL policies, and by state and federal law including HIPAA.
- An individual Vermonter's data is available to authorized users unless they opt-out to block their data from view.
- Currently, 98.9% of Vermonters are sharing their data and 1.1% of Vermonters have opted-out.
- Regular public outreach to inform Vermonters of their options.
- More information for individuals is available at vitl.net/sharing.

Patient Education

- VITL's fall 2023 education campaign utilized a broad range of media to reach more Vermonters across ages, locations, and media habits. The campaign ended in December, after sharing educational messages via:
 - Social media, including Instagram and Facebook
 - Vermont Public, via a radio sponsorship message
 - Commercial [radio message](#) – this was a new medium for VITL, used for its broad reach and longer format (30 seconds) which enabled us to convey more information about how and why health data is shared
 - VTDigger [sponsored news story](#) – another new medium that offered more in-depth content for deeper education
- VITL continues to encourage provider organizations to help educate Vermonters about health data sharing, and supports them with an [education toolkit](#) and a section of [vitl.net](#) specifically for patients
- VITL is currently planning our next education campaign including expanded outreach to individuals who speak languages other than English

Protecting Patient Data

The foundation of our work is the security of patient data and ensuring appropriate access to that data. This includes honoring patients' rights and preferences.

In support of this commitment, VITL:

- Continuously reviews and updates our security and recovery practices to ensure they align with best practices and mitigate the ever-changing threat landscape
- Ensures transparency about how VHIE data is shared
- Monitors and aligns to regulatory changes
- Maintains agreements and controls to ensure appropriate sharing of data

How the VHIE is Funded

- The majority of VITL's funding is through a contract with the Agency of Human Services (AHS)
 - Maintenance and Operations supports the ongoing operation of the VHIE
 - Design, Development and Installation supports the creation of new functionality and capabilities
- The State receives funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), leveraged by dollars generated by a portion of the State's Health Care Claims Tax.
- Additional revenue is derived from custom reporting contracts, secure messaging services, and event notification services

Statewide Health Information Exchange Steering Committee

- In accordance with 18 V.S.A. § 9351, AHS develops a Health Information Exchange Strategic Plan, which lays out a five-year strategy for HIE, and includes annual updates and plans for improving and developing state-wide health data infrastructure.
 - The plan is developed in partnership with the Statewide Health Information Exchange Steering Committee,
 - The committee informs State priorities, and serve as advocates for health care's data needs from the HIE.
- Bi-State Primary Care Assoc
 - VAHHS
 - Vermont Care Partners
 - Blue Cross Blue Shield VT
 - OneCare Vermont
 - Long Term Care Advocate
 - Home Health Representative
 - Consumer Representative
 - Health Care Advocate
 - Vermont Agency of Human Services
 - Vermont Department of Health
 - Green Mountain Care Board
 - Vermont Blueprint for Health
 - Vermont Agency of Digital Services
 - VITL

Green Mountain Care Board

The [Green Mountain Care Board has three major authorities](#) related to health information technology (HIT) and health information exchange (HIE).

1. Review and approve Vermont Health Information Exchange Strategic Plan (HIE Plan) – 18 V.S.A. § 9375(a)(2)(A) and 18 V.S.A. § 9351(a)
2. Review and approve Vermont Health Information Exchange (VHIE) Connectivity Criteria – 18 V.S.A. § 9375(a)(2)(B) and 9352(i)(2)
3. Review and approve Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL) budget - 18 V.S.A. §9375(b)(2)(C)

New Partnerships with Public Health

- Covid created opportunities for HIEs to demonstrate real value in support of public health
 - Connecting with new testing sites for testing data
 - Collecting and delivering immunization records
 - Delivering daily reporting of hospitalizations, resource usage
 - Supporting case investigations and contact tracing
- Our partnership with the Department of Public Health continues to strengthen:
 - A connection to the Vermont Immunization Registry enables providers to pull immunization history and forecasting into their EHRs
 - Health equity reporting and analysis
 - Expanded lab reporting for reportable diseases
 - Strategic plan in place for the coming years

A Look to the Future

- **Work with AHS to support the development of the Unified Health Data Space;**
- Continue our commitment to **connecting to as many providers supporting Vermonters as possible**, and integrating that data into the Vermont Health Information Exchange;
- Partner with the Vermont Agency of Human Services to create opportunities to integrate new data types into the Vermont Health Information Exchange, including **substance use disorder data and social determinants of health data;**
- Continue to work with our stakeholders and clients to find opportunities to leverage our new technical capabilities to **deliver the health data that providers need when and where they need it;**
- Explore using Vermont Health Information Exchange data in new ways to support the delivery of **quality measures and other analytics;**
- **Evaluate opportunities to participate in federal interoperability initiatives**, such as the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology's (ONC) Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA), while also protecting the privacy of sensitive data that is protected under Vermont law.

VITL's Mission & Vision

VITL's **mission** is to securely aggregate, standardize, and share the data needed to improve the effectiveness of health care for Vermonters.

VITL's **vision** is to be a leader in collaboratively delivering actionable data that leads to better health.

Part of a [Strategic Framework](#) introduced in 2021