



PROVIDERS: Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

What is the Georgia Health Information Network (GaHIN)?

The GaHIN is a non-profit organization dedicated to the use and exchange of electronic health information. The goals of GaHIN are to improve patient-centered healthcare, increase provider efficiency and promote the health status of the state's population—all through the electronic statewide health information network described below.

GaHIN is part of a public-private collaborative of healthcare stakeholders from around the State of Georgia, including the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) and the Georgia Health Information Technology Extension Center (GA-HITEC). These organizations, among many others, are working together to establish the statewide health information network technology infrastructure necessary to electronically connect healthcare providers across the state.

What is the purpose and overall responsibility of GaHIN?

GaHIN's purpose is to close the patient information gap across all care settings by working with its stakeholders and vendors to electronically connect disparate systems and data sources in order to support improved quality of care and patient health outcomes and reductions in patient healthcare costs.

GaHIN is responsible for working through its vendors, who will connect healthcare organizations and providers to the Georgia statewide health information network (the Network). The members can exchange health information, while maintaining the privacy, security and accuracy of the information being exchanged.

The exchange of health information and electronic health records (EHR) is protected and processed in accordance with standards set by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

GaHIN Products & Services

What Products and Services does GaHIN offer?

GaHIN offers services that are designed to give secure access to critical protected health information (PHI) at the point of care and to foster greater provider-to-provider collaboration.

We understand that when it comes to Health Information Exchange (HIE), one size does not fit all. That's why we offer two harmonizing products -- **GeorgiaDirect** and **Georgia ConnectedCare**.

GeorgiaDirect enables members to exchange information by Direct messaging, a secure email standard designed for healthcare.

Georgia ConnectedCare is a query-based exchange core service—an innovative technology solution that offers healthcare providers the ability to securely find patients, wherever and whenever they seek care—directly through their electronic health record systems.



What is the technology structure supporting the Georgia Health Information Network?

The technology structure of GaHIN is supported through two vendors: Truven Analytics (Georgia ConnectedCare) and Medicity (GeorgiaDirect).

Truven Analytics provides a flexible technology platform that is easily adaptable to federal legislation and regulations affecting Health Information Technology (HIT). With Truven's platform, GaHIN also has the capability to connect with HIEs in Georgia and other states. This technology is used in the **Georgia ConnectedCare** product.

Medicity combines clinical data exchange with tools to engage collaboration and coordination between care professionals through secure, intuitive tools for referral management, messaging and transitions of care. This technology is used in the **GeorgiaDirect** product.

GeorgiaDirect

In today's world, secure messaging is a critical component of patient care. Providers must be able to share patient health data knowing that patient confidentiality is protected. GaHIN is pleased to offer GeorgiaDirect to fill that need.

What is GeorgiaDirect?

GeorgiaDirect enables users to exchange information by Direct messaging, a secure email standard designed for healthcare.

Doctors, hospitals, labs, nursing stations—or anyone needing to share health information—is assigned a unique GeorgiaDirect address, such as city.hospital@gadirect.net. The web-based software enables an environment in which all messages sent from and received by that address can be protected and processed in accordance with standards set by HIPAA.

How is GeorgiaDirect used?

You'll access GeorgiaDirect to send certain types of health information, such as lab results, x-ray reports, referrals, patient data, transition of care documents and much more, to a network of providers.

Who can I send to and receive from?

GeorgiaDirect messaging is a security and email protocol that is designed for exchange of patient medical records over the internet and to allow collaboration between a network of providers. You may only communicate with other providers whom have a GeorgiaDirect email address.

What are the benefits of GeorgiaDirect?

GeorgiaDirect is a free service that allows providers to share electronic health information to improve quality of care. GeorgiaDirect:

- Delivers secure, directed messaging of patient health information between known, trusted recipients to improve quality of care
- Connects healthcare stakeholders using a simple push of information
- Facilitates patient referrals, transition of care and hospital discharge



How will I know if the exchange of health information is secure?

At GaHIN, privacy and security of patient information is of utmost importance. Unlike paper health record storage methods, GeorgiaDirect is built to only allow authorized providers to view your information on a “need to know” basis.

Only providers who have entered into a legal contract with GaHIN and agree to abide by its strict privacy and security policies and comply with all applicable federal and state laws are allowed access to their patient’s information. GaHIN complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009 (HITECH).

Are there any system requirements to use GeorgiaDirect messaging?

GeorgiaDirect messaging is a web-based product that does not require setup by your IT department. You would only need access to the internet to utilize the services.

How can I sign up for GeorgiaDirect?

To sign up for GeorgiaDirect, please visit GaHIN.org/GetStarted to register your practice. Once your registration is complete, a Health Information Services Provider (HISP) administrator will contact you to schedule a demonstration, verify your practice and/or providers, and provide you with a Participation Agreement.

If I have more questions, who can I contact?

For more information, please contact the GaHIN office at info@gahin.org

Meeting Meaningful Use through GeorgiaDirect

How does GeorgiaDirect help providers meet Meaningful Use (MU) requirements?

Because GeorgiaDirect allows providers to electronically transmit patient health information to providers outside their organization - and allows for exchange of electronic health records - it is a quick, easy way for providers to meet the requirement for Stage 1 Meaningful Use.

For example, Immunization Registry reporting or patient summary exchange could be attached and sent via email to meet Meaningful Use requirements.

Georgia ConnectedCare

GaHIN is excited to introduce Georgia ConnectedCare, a comprehensive suite of products that allows you to exchange patient information with other providers electronically.

Georgia ConnectedCare is a query-based exchange core service—an innovative technology solution that offers healthcare providers the ability to securely find patients, wherever and whenever they seek care—directly through their electronic health record systems.



Georgia ConnectedCare

- Facilitates both long-term and preventive care—whether in a provider’s office, hospital, other healthcare facility. This system also helps coordinate patient transfer within Georgia and across state lines.
- Streamlines the data-retrieval process for patient medical records and government reports.
- Eliminates unnecessary medications, tests and hospitalizations—not to mention costly courier fees. You only have to connect once instead of maintaining multiple costly provider connections.

Georgia ConnectedCare Access to the GaHIN Network

What is the GaHIN Network?

The Network supports the flow of protected health information between the different healthcare information technology (IT) systems that may be used by various Members and Member Affiliates -- such as physician practices, hospitals, long-term care facilities, labs, radiology centers, health plans, and other member organizations. The Network allows for the delivery of the "right health information to the right place at the right time," providing for safer, more timely and efficient patient-centered care. The Network can also help streamline healthcare providers’ reporting requirements to public health departments and such departments’ access to such information.

Who is eligible to join GaHIN and access the GaHIN Network?

Any organization or person that meets the requirements to become either a Member or Member Affiliate, as such requirements are outlined in the Member Agreement, may join GaHIN and access the GaHIN Network.

A Member is any organization that (i) meets the requirements for participation in the GaHIN Network as contained in the GaHIN Network Operating Policies and Technical Requirements, (ii) is accepted by Truven and GaHIN for participation in the GaHIN Network, and (iii) executes a Member Agreement and any appropriate documents.

A Member Affiliate is any person who has been authorized by a Member to access patient health data through the GaHIN Network and in a manner defined by such Member, in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Member Agreement and applicable laws (which includes all applicable statutes, rules and regulations of the State of Georgia, as well as all applicable federal statutes, rules, and regulations, including without limitation, the HIPAA and HITECH Acts).

What is the GaHIN’s community approach to the network?

GaHIN takes a community approach to the Network in Georgia. The Network connects Members or Member Affiliate healthcare providers and institutions to other Member and Member Affiliate providers and institutions within their respective communities and across the State of Georgia.

As a result, Members and Member Affiliates are granted an opportunity to immediately and securely access, send and/or receive vital protected health information.

GaHIN continuously collaborates with Members and Member Affiliates to make dramatic improvements to the quality and costs associated with healthcare while simultaneously improving patient health. By working closely with healthcare leaders across the state to connect healthcare systems, community-based Health Information Exchanges (HIEs), vendors, and other healthcare organizations and providers to the Network, GaHIN can help such healthcare stakeholders fulfill their respective and unique community healthcare goals.



What is the difference between a regional Health Information Exchange (HIE) and the GaHIN Network?

The State of Georgia is fortunate to have a number of health system and community-based regional HIEs. Rather than duplicate efforts already undertaken by these HIEs, GaHIN employs a "network of networks model" by connecting these regional HIEs through the Network. Such a connection allows these regional HIEs to seamlessly share protected health information and improve care coordination, giving access across the state.

In addition to the foregoing, GaHIN uses the Network's technology to make available a set of core and value-added services to providers, thus benefiting Georgia's healthcare systems and establishing widespread and robust interoperability across the state. The Network also keeps GaHIN's operation manageable and associated overhead low, thereby limiting the costs that GaHIN would have to pass on to Members and Member Affiliates.

Who may access and use the Network?

Below are the categories of persons and entities who may have access to the Network. Only those who have been approved by and executed appropriate contracts may access and use the Network:

- Physicians
- Mid-level Practitioners (Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives)
- Doctors of Dentistry, Optometry and Podiatry
- Hospitals
- Safety Net Clinics
- Behavioral & Mental Health Providers
- County/State Departments of Public Health
- Long-term Care
- Home Health
- Hospice
- Labs
- Imaging Centers
- Urgent Care Clinics
- Health Plans
- Other entities as approved by the Board of Directors

GaHIN outreach teams are actively working with stakeholders to create awareness about the Network and its products and services and the value of the Network between providers.

How does my healthcare organization connect to the network?

Healthcare organizations should contact one of the connected regional HIEs listed at GaHIN.org to connect to the Network. It will be necessary for your organization to contract directly with the regional HIE to connect your organization's EHR system to access the Network. If your organization does not have an EHR system in place, you may still connect to the Network through an EHR system offered by the regional HIE.

Note: Not all regional HIEs in Georgia offer GaHIN products or access to the Network. If your organization decides to connect to GaHIN or the Network through a regional HIE, please be sure to select a regional HIE that is already participating in GaHIN.

If you have questions or need more information, please contact the GaHIN office at info@gahin.org.

What responsibilities does a member have?

Each Member must meet its obligations under their agreements, including, but not limited to, abiding by applicable laws and GaHIN Policies. All Members must also ensure that their Member Affiliates meet applicable requirements under those Agreements.

What is the process to become a member?

If your organization is interested in becoming a Member, please contact us at info@gahin.org for more information. You will receive the GaHIN Getting Connected Toolkit containing all of the information necessary to begin the Network connection process.

What is in the Getting Connected Toolkit?

The GaHIN Getting Connected Toolkit consists of several documents that must be completed for an organization to become a Member of GaHIN, and to connect, technologically, to the Network. The following documents currently are part of the Getting Connected Toolkit:

- Member Application
- Member Agreement
- GaHIN Subscription Agreement
- GaHIN Policies
- GaHIN Getting Connected Guide [Note: This document is a high-level guide describing the on-boarding process and minimum connectivity business, technology and financial requirements necessary to implement the Network]
- GaHIN Interoperability Services Guide [Note: This document provides a technical overview of GaHIN and the standards-based specifications regarding connectivity to the GaHIN Network. This document also provides an introduction to the technical services, implementation methodology and national standards employed to develop GaHIN into a highly secure and standards-based platform that will serve as the backbone for HIE in the State of Georgia]
- GaHIN On-Boarding Decisions [Note: This document is a questionnaire developed to guide initial conversations between Members and GaHIN relating to the type and breadth of the interface between Members and GaHIN]

Must my member application be approved prior to gaining access to the Network?

Yes. Each organization must submit a fully completed Member Application to the GaHIN Account Manager, receive a written approval from GaHIN, and execute the Agreements prior to exchanging protected health information through the Network.

The GaHIN Executive Committee will review and approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove each Member Application. These reviews will take place on a bi-weekly basis. All Member Application decisions will be documented in correspondence to the potential Member with recommendations for Member Application enhancements (if and when necessary).

Please note, however, that potential Members may work with their respective Account Manager to begin technical consultations while awaiting an official approval decision of the Member Application.

How quickly can my organization become a member and get connected to the Network?

Generally, the process to connect a potential Member to the Network takes between 8-10 weeks. The actual length of time to connect to the Network will depend on the priorities set by your healthcare organization and EHR vendor.

What software and infrastructure requirements must organizations meet in order to join GaHIN?

Organizations must abide by the Network Operating Policies and Technical Requirements (available in the Getting Connected Toolkit) in order to become Members.

Do Members need to comply with their own policies in addition to GaHIN's Policies?

Yes. Each Member must have written policies and procedures in place that govern its Member Affiliates' ability to access information on or through the Member's health information exchange, if any, and through the Network (the Policies). These Member Affiliate Policies likely will differ among Members. If there is a conflict between a Member's Policies and GaHIN's Policies, GaHIN's Policies shall control.

Are Members required to carry insurance?

Yes. Each Member must carry insurance in an amount sufficient to cover its obligations under the Member Agreement; however, each Member reserves the right to (i) self-insure to meet the obligation of coverage under the Member Agreement (provided that such self-insurance meets all regulatory requirements); or (ii) retain insurance coverage through another state governmental agency, as applicable, authorized to maintain insurance coverage on behalf of such Member. The suggested minimum insurance coverage under the Member Agreement is as follows: Network Privacy and Security Coverage policy with minimum limits of liability of Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) per occurrence and Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) in the annual aggregate.

Are Members permitted to store protected health information (PHI) derived from other Members and/or Member Affiliates?

Members and Member Affiliates may store PHI obtained through the Network for the permitted purposes identified in the Member Agreement and applicable laws. Members and Member Affiliates may not store, except as permitted by Applicable Laws, "sensitive health information" (SHI) (defined as any (i) drug and alcohol records (see 42 C.F.R. Part 2); (ii) genetic information (see O.C.G.A. Sections 33-54-3 and 33-54-6); (iii) mental health records (see 45 C.F.R. Section 164.508(a) (2) and O.C.G.A. Sections 43-39-16 and 37-7-166); (iv) HIV/AIDS information (see O.C.G.A. Section 24-12-21); and (v) mental retardation records (see O.C.G.A. Section 37-4-125).



What type of clinical information may be sent or received through use of the Network?

The following clinical information may be sent and received by Members and Member Affiliates through use of the Network:

- Transcription notes (i.e. discharge summaries, histories and physicals, operative reports and emergency department reports)
- Continuity of care documents (CCDs) Immunization updates and queries
- Consult reports
- Referral requests
- Secure messaging
- Lab & Pathology results
- Radiology reports
- Public health alerts and notification
- Admission, discharge and transfer information (planned)
- Lab & pathology ordering (planned)
- Radiology ordering (planned)

Will GaHIN offer more products and services in the future?

Yes. GaHIN is collaborating with a wide variety of healthcare stakeholders to continuously deliver new products and services.

If I have more questions, who can I contact?

For more information, please contact the GaHIN office at info@gahin.org.

Georgia ConnectedCare Features

Georgia Medicaid Health, Dental and Pharmacy Data Feature

This feature grants Members and Member Affiliates access to Medicaid beneficiaries' historical claims data (including medical, dental and pharmacy data), authorizations, diagnoses and procedures. Granting Members and Member Affiliates access to such historical beneficiary protected health information (PHI) helps fill the information gap among healthcare settings and data sources across the State of Georgia.

Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS) Feature

Georgia ConnectedCare grants Members and Member Affiliates with access to a simple, bi-directional exchange of immunization information with GRITS. Members and Member Affiliates can both request and submit patients' immunization records from and to GRITS.

24/7 Web-Based Clinical Portal Feature

This feature grants Members and Member Affiliates a means of accessing patient information securely and efficiently from a web-based portal that is available twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week (24/7).

Note: Member Affiliates who access the Network through a Member must request access to the portal from the Member.

Benefits:

- This convenient portal gives Members and Member Affiliates the ability to migrate systems and workflows at their own pace, thereby helping to achieve a path to Meaningful Use, reducing Health Information Technology (HIT) costs, and adapting to new regulations.
- The clinical portal allows Members and Member Affiliates that are away from their respective offices or organizations or who do not have an EHR to access clear, consistent and robust clinical records for their patients.

Georgia ConnectedCare services and delivers an additional set of robust HIE services. Some of the services within Georgia ConnectedCare are available only to Members.

Truven-Hosted Data Repository

The Truven-hosted data repository allows each Member and Member Affiliate to collect clinical information in a single place. Truven makes Member- and Member Affiliate-hosted data repositories available to all Members and Member Affiliates as a value-added service; Members and Member Affiliates, however, ultimately own the data repository.

Benefits:

- The data repository takes the burden of managing responses to Network query requests from the Members' and Member Affiliates' respective data centers, thereby reducing the burden on Members' and Member Affiliates' respective data infrastructures and shortening query response times.
- The data repository enables the use and implementation of other Network services, including Care Alerts (discussed below). Use of the data repository also grants Members and Member Affiliates a platform to launch future services.

As part of the technical implementation of the data repository, Truven works with Members and Member Affiliates to deploy its required functionalities

Care Alerts for Admission, Discharge, and Transfer

The Care Alert service will notify Members and Member Affiliates of their patients' acute care events and supports greater care coordination opportunities. Members and Member Affiliates will receive automated notifications of their patients' admissions, discharges or transfers to or from acute settings. This feature is especially important for accountable care organizations and patient-centered medical homes that often rely on such data in order to implement post-acute care decisions. In order to receive Care Alerts, Members and Member Affiliates must utilize a Truven-hosted data repository. Once implemented, Members and Member Affiliates may receive care alert notifications via text, email or directly to their respective EHRs.

Benefits:

- Members and Member Affiliates may submit immunization records and updates to GRITS in accordance with Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements, even if GRITS does not yet support the most up-to-date HL7 standard, as such standards have been promulgated under applicable federal regulations.



- Reduces the technical burden placed on Members and Member Affiliates by eliminating the need to install and maintain the PHIN-MS application necessary to support submissions to GRITS.

Meeting Meaningful Use Through Georgia ConnectedCare

How does Georgia ConnectedCare help you meet Meaningful Use requirements?

The data capture and reporting capability within ConnectedCare facilitates every aspect of Meaningful Use and public health reporting.

Can I meet Meaningful Use stage 2 requirements for public health immunizations without using the 2014 MU standard required interface?

Immunizations must be submitted according to the 2014 MU standards in order to meet MU 2 requirements. This standard requires the use of the HL7 2.5.1 interface. A compliant message sent from a Certified EHR to a Certified HIE solution (that converts the message into the standard currently supported by GRITS) will allow attestation for Meaningful Use stage 2. Truven HIE software is stage 2 Meaningful Use certified; if the original message comes from a Certified EHR and meets the appropriate standards then the measure should be met.

What exemptions exist for the 2014 Meaningful Use stage 2 requirement of an HL7 interface?

Exemptions are uncommon and reliance upon qualification for an exemption is not recommended. You may be exempt from using the 2014 interface standards if you have achieved an on-going submission in a previous year. For more details, or if your exemption question is not answered, please find further documentation on meeting Meaningful Use stage 2 here: [Eligible Professional](#), or [Eligible Hospital and Critical Access Hospitals](#).

Features Supporting Meaningful Use

Public Health Reporting: Syndromic Surveillance

This feature allows Members and Member Affiliates to submit mandated reportable disease events (Syndromic Surveillance) to public health departments from their certified EHRs. Specifically, Members and Member Affiliates will be able to submit Syndromic Surveillance reports to the Georgia State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System ("SendSS") in accordance with Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements from their respective EHRs. By connecting to the Network, Members and Member Affiliates are able to eliminate the burden of having to install and maintain the PHIN-MS application to support submissions to SendSS.

Public Health Reporting: Electronic Lab Reporting ("ELR") Offloading

Lab test results that meet Georgia's Reportable Event criteria may be routed to the ordering provider and to SendSS without intervention by the Members and Member Affiliates or the lab through the implementation of this feature, thereby reducing the burden on Members and Member Affiliates and labs from maintaining: (1) detailed knowledge of the current reportable lab event criteria; and (2) multiple interfaces to support both electronic lab result delivery and reporting to SendSS. Once connected, reportable lab results sent through the Network connection will be automatically routed SendSS as a part of the ELR Offloading service.



eHealth Exchange Service (Nationwide Network)

The eHealth Exchange Service gives Members and Member Affiliates (through their respective EHRs) the ability to share patient information with other HIEs across state lines. The principle benefits of this feature are that it: (1) allows for greater coordination of patient care; (2) supports the patient goals of accountable care organizations and patient-centered medical homes; and (3) supports Meaningful Use Stage 2 reporting requirements.