

Alabama, Georgia connect to securely exchange health information

Medicaid patients in Alabama and most patients in Georgia who cross state lines to see medical providers will now benefit from the secure state-to-state connection established in mid-October by Alabama's [One Health Record](#)® statewide health information exchange and [Georgia Health Information Network](#) (GaHIN), Georgia's health information exchange.

The connection between the two states is a first for Alabama which is seeking to increase secure, real-time access to essential patient information for physicians, hospitals and other medical providers at the point of care. It is the second connection for Georgia, which previously connected to South Carolina's HIE.

"By connecting with GaHIN, we help advance the health of the citizens of Alabama and Georgia by putting more complete patient information in the healthcare providers' hands," said One Health Record Director Paul Brannan. "Ultimately, we will also be able to reduce unnecessary healthcare costs, increase administrative efficiencies and improve health outcomes."



"Healthcare doesn't stop at the state line, so we need to ensure that physicians in both Georgia and Alabama have real-time access to patient health information at the point of care," said Denise Hines, executive director of GaHIN. "Having medical history and pertinent patient information from the neighboring states can help improve care quality and save time by providing critical information at the point of care during non-urgent and emergency situations."

The Georgia and Alabama HIEs both leverage a federated exchange architecture model that does not necessitate the creation of new data warehouses or a single data location, but rather allows data to remain with the original providers and facilities until an authorized request for patient information is received. These HIEs are secure exchange networks that offer remote access to electronic health records, providing connectivity to help providers meet federal Meaningful Use requirements.

One Health Record created the infrastructure for exchanging health information in Alabama through a grant awarded to Medicaid in 2009 by the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC). Under the guidance of the state HIE Commission, Alabama has created an interoperable, two-way data exchange system between physicians, hospitals and others. One Health Record enables providers and hospitals to securely track and share patients' medical histories, helping to facilitate coordinated patient care, reduce duplicative treatments and avoid costly errors.

Established in 2009, GaHIN has successfully connected members consisting of regional HIEs, hospital systems, physician groups and individual practitioners. The Georgia network currently has more than 18 million demographic patient records accessible to providers. GaHIN is connected to the national eHealth Exchange and is also a member of DirectTrust, which enables its members to securely exchange information nationally with other providers who are using DirectTrust. GaHIN's products, *Georgia ConnectedCare* and *GeorgiaDirect*, help its members achieve Meaningful Use Stages 1 and 2.