

Introduction

The Health Care Authority (HCA) recognizes health information technology (HIT) and health information exchange (HIE) are important tools to support access to health care, social services, care coordination, and improved provider and patient experience. The list of all potential “modules” (e.g., components or parts) within HIT and HIE is long, and the need for community information exchange (CIE) intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there isn't a shared definition of CIE and its components, HCA defines CIE as complementary modules that support access to and navigation between organizations and services, care coordination, referrals, and appropriate sharing of patient information/records. CIE modules include a resource directory, closed-loop referral, community health records, event notification, user-based access, etc.

HCA's strategy to advance CIE

HCA is pursuing the following strategies to implement CIE statewide:

1. **Interoperability¹ standards that may be scaled and sustained statewide:**

- HCA will support interoperability so that systems may connect and interact across platforms and vendors, which is achieved through the coordination and development of interoperability standards. This is critical for a few reasons:
 - A single vendor/platform is not expected to address every module or work for all partners.
 - Existing regional investments and advancements should be utilized and connected, rather than replaced.
 - Existing provider infrastructure should be connected and utilized to the extent possible to avoid redundant reporting/access.

Despite the reasons listed above, there are many partners and communities that lack CIE infrastructure. There is a clear opportunity for scope and scale, in terms of cost and efficiency, for Washington State to align around a common platform/vendor.

HCA believes it is appropriate and necessary to pursue and make available a common platform for partners in the most cost-effective way possible. Whether funded by HCA—depending on a funding source or in coordination with other funders—HCA will continue to support adoption of a common CIE platform among providers and community-based organizations (CBOs).

¹ Interoperability is the ability of people, organizations, and systems to interact and interconnect so they can efficiently and effectively exchange and use information.

2. Modular approach to CIE implementation:

HCA recognizes statewide CIE advancement will require a long-term commitment, including coordination across many agencies and funders and the development of an overarching CIE Roadmap.

On a shorter-term basis, certain modules can be implemented sooner than others, particularly those that have fewer interdependencies and barriers (e.g., privacy and security constraints). HCA will support incremental implementation in terms of scope and scale while maintaining a focus on long-term interoperability standards.

HCA recognizes a significant opportunity for the advancement of several CIE priorities, with the goal of increasing capacity and connectivity among social service organizations and CBOs. Some of these CIE priorities are:

- Building awareness and access to available social supports and community resources (e.g., a resource directory).
- Supporting connectivity and coordination between social service organizations and CBOs (e.g., developing infrastructure and establishing the common processes of HIE).
- Referral processes and supporting infrastructure to connect clinical providers and CBOs (e.g., closed-loop referral and use-based access).

