
P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Two of State’s Largest Health Information Networks Connect for the First Time, Enabling Secure Transfer of Health Data Across Texas

Governor Welcomes Agreement to Connect Patients, Doctors and Hospitals

Austin, TX – April 23, 2014 – The Texas Health Services Authority (THSA) today announced that two of the state’s largest local health information networks took an important step in leveraging technology to connect patients, doctors and hospitals through Greater Houston Healthconnect (HEALTHCONNECT) and Integrated Care Collaboration (ICC) of Austin. This connection, which is made possible by THSA’s state-level shared services, also known as “HIETexas,” enables tens of thousands of health care providers from different parts of the state to quickly and securely share patient health data and critical medical information that can save lives.

Ensuring that patient preferences are honored is a key feature of shared service agreements that are designed to maintain local control of data management. Connecting through a single interface, HIETexas, is a cost-effective and efficient means of providing information under a single legal framework that ensures trust and interoperability, and eliminates the local expense of designing separate interfaces. In addition to connectivity, this collaboration will provide HEALTHCONNECT and ICC with a patient consent management service that determines if a patient has expressed consent to access such information.

The demand for electronic transfer of health information among providers is growing nationwide along with efforts to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care delivery. A recent study in New York showed that use of such technology reduced hospital readmissions by 30 percent.

“Texas continues to be a national leader in developing and implementing health information technology and secure sharing of patients’ health information,” said Texas Governor Rick Perry, who initiated the program and establishment of THSA during his administration. “The secure, electronic transfer of health information between authorized health care providers will assist in reducing medical errors and preventing health care fraud.”

In addition to the Houston and Austin-based networks, Texas has eight other local networks that provide secure access to electronic health records in their communities. Once connected through HIETexas, these local networks also will be positioned to securely share health information across the state.

“Currently, health information in local HIEs is siloed, so an emergency room doctor in Austin cannot get patient records from Dallas, Houston or San Antonio. HIETexas will connect these community HIEs so that the emergency room doctor or another treating physician has access to the right information, at the right time,” said Tony Gilman, Chief Executive Officer of THSA.

“The new suite of shared services for local HIEs allows us to simplify and accelerate data transfer while always respecting patient privacy,” added Gilman. “Establishing strong local HIEs has been a core strategy in developing our state’s health information infrastructure. Connecting Greater Houston Healthconnect and Integrated Care Collaboration is an exciting and significant advancement for our state.”

“We have been very pleased to work with THSA over the years,” said Dr. Phil Beckett, HEALTHCONNECT acting President and Chief Executive Officer. “Collaboration is the hallmark of a successful health information exchange program and today’s announcement formalizes our combined efforts into contractual commitments to serving each other as well as the patients and providers who are always at the center of our focus.”

“Today marks a significant achievement as we work towards increased connectivity among all Texas patients, doctors and medical facilities,” said Carl Angel, Executive Director of ICC. “The connection between ICC and HEALTHCONNECT through HIETexas will ultimately mean greater access to better care for all the patients we serve in the greater Austin and Houston communities.”

To view a video that illustrates how HIETexas connects Texans, visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24LyU7FMTPQ>

About THSA: The Texas Health Services Authority is responsible for coordinating the implementation of health information exchange (HIE) in Texas. The THSA was created by the Texas legislature in 2007 as a public-private partnership, legally structured as a non-profit corporation, to support the improvement of the Texas health care system by promoting and coordinating HIE and health information technology (HIT) throughout the state to ensure that the right information is available to the right health care providers at the right times.

About Greater Houston Healthconnect: Greater Houston Healthconnect is an independent, community-based organization responsible for enabling information exchange among healthcare providers in a 20-county region. It is tasked with mobilizing healthcare information electronically across organizations to enhance the safety, quality, and efficiency of care and improve information access throughout the region. Key stakeholders include healthcare providers, payers, employers and the community as a whole. For more information, visit <http://www.Healthconnectconnect.org/>

About Integrated Care Collaboration: The ICC is a nonprofit alliance of health care providers in central Texas dedicated to the collection, analysis and sharing of health information with the goal of improving health care quality and cost efficiency across the continuum of care. ICC members are health and social services providers, payers and purchasers, including hospital systems, healthcare networks, community health centers, clinics, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, individual providers and others.

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