

Health Information Exchanges for Wisconsin's Local Health Departments



What is a Health Information Exchange?

There are two meanings to the phrase “health information exchange”:

- 1) **Verb:** The electronic sharing of health information among organizations
- 2) **Noun:** An organization that provides services to enable the electronic sharing of health information¹

This fact sheet is about **Health Information Exchange organizations (HIEs)**, which are also called Health Information Organizations or HIOs. **HIEs facilitate and expedite the electronic exchange of health information between participating organizations according to nationally recognized standards.** This health information is securely exchanged according to state and federal privacy regulations.

Why would a Local Health Department use a Health Information Exchange?

HIEs have been targeted primarily at clinical health systems, but there is growing interest in harnessing HIE functionalities for public health. Participating Local Health Departments (LHD) have access to health information from other electronic health record (EHR) systems that reside in or are accessible through the HIE. HIEs improve the completeness, efficiency, and timeliness of health information exchange. The full utility of an HIE depends on the health services that an LHD offers.

What are some Public Health Use Cases for HIE participation?

Mandated reporting of lab results or disease diagnoses: An LHD could send all reportable results or diagnoses that they collect to an HIE, which would in turn submit that data to state-level public health programs.

- Syndromic surveillance is the only Wisconsin public health reporting program that currently supports HIE data submission. In coming years, more Wisconsin public health reporting programs will be able to receive HIE data submission.

Population-level surveillance: Aggregated, population-level health information can inform an LHD about the prevalence of conditions like asthma or obesity in their service area. LHDs can use this information to determine their priority areas and outreach efforts.

Care delivery: For LHDs that provide clinical services like immunizations and screenings for sexually transmitted infections, the HIE can provide helpful information about a patient’s care history. This minimizes duplicative services and improves the timeliness of appropriate care delivery.

Investigation and case management: LHDs can use the HIE to securely access and share information about someone who has a reportable disease. This may include the person’s health history, contacts, and care received for the reportable disease. This electronic exchange reduces the administrative burden of traditional information gathering through phone calls, in-person visits, and faxing.

What Health Information Exchanges are in Wisconsin?

If you are interested in joining an HIE, Wisconsin has several options. Contact the HIEs listed below to find out if their service is offered in your area:

- **Wisconsin Statewide Health Information Network (WISHIN):** <http://www.wishin.org/>
- **HIE Bridge Health Information Exchange:** <http://www.hiebridge.org/>
- **Healthway (eHealth Exchange):** <http://www.healthwayinc.org/>

¹ <http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/health-information-exchange>