

An Introduction to TEFCA

The Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement™, known as TEFCA™, operates in the United States as a nationwide framework for health information sharing. TEFCA was created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy (ASTP) to remove barriers for sharing health records electronically among healthcare providers, patients, public health agencies, and payers.

Healthcare
providers



Patients



Public health
agencies



Payers



Everyone who provides and receives health care – which is all of us – should have access to the information we need for effective care and better health outcomes. TEFCA was created to help make that possible.



A Nationwide Network-of-Networks for Health Information Exchange

The TEFCA framework directly supports nationwide health data sharing by connecting existing large health information networks (HINs) across the country. This, in turn, connects each network's participants, which can be dozens or even hundreds of health systems, federal care providers, public health agencies, payers, health IT vendors, and even other HINs.

Each of these existing networks supports health information sharing for specific states, regions, and localities, or among customers using the same electronic health record (EHR) vendor. A few of the larger HINs operate on a national level.

Before TEFCA, some of these networks already were connected to each other, and their participants could share medical records across those connected networks. However, significant gaps remained which created barriers to seamless nationwide health information exchange for everyone. TEFCA aims to bridge those gaps by connecting all participating HINs, as well as their members, using common rules of the road and shared technology standards.

Much in the same way we can speak to others across all mobile phone carriers, and you can access your financial records regardless of which bank's ATM you visit, TEFCA delivers a nationwide framework to enable secure network-to-network health information exchange across HINs.



How TEFCA Operates

Large health information networks are volunteering to serve as the backbone for network connectivity across the country to support TEFCA exchange. These networks are called Qualified Health Information Network™ (QHINs™).

To become a QHIN, a network must pass rigorous technology and security testing and agree to the same rules of engagement for themselves and their members. As a result, any organization participating in one QHIN can ask for and receive data from members of any other QHIN.

TEFCA Can Benefit EVERYONE in Health Care



Healthcare Providers

- Improved patient care coordination
- Improved health outcomes
- Easier reporting of public health cases



Patients & Caregivers

- More complete health records available in consumer apps
- Ability to electronically share information with doctors and caregivers
- Easier coordination with insurance companies



Public Health

- Faster access to information about new cases
- Efficient reporting and validation of cases
- Improved access to population health data



Payers

- Streamlined prior authorization process
- Ability to make determinations in real-time
- Fewer duplicate tests
- Faster completion of medical reviews

Getting Started with TEFCA

Your path to TEFCA-based health information sharing will vary based on whether you're a healthcare organization or an individual. To learn more about TEFCA, its benefits for you, and next steps for participating, visit HealthIT.gov/TEFCA.



Approved Reasons for Sharing Health Data

TEFCA will make it possible for organizations and individual patients/caregivers to access and share data for clearly defined reasons, known as TEFCA Exchange Purposes.

TEFCA currently authorizes six Exchange Purposes with the expectation that the list will grow as TEFCA-based exchange expands.



Treatment



Payment



Healthcare Operations



Public Health



Government Benefits Determination



Individual Access Services