Blue Button Fact Sheet

The Blue Button initiative is a public-private partnership between the health care industry and the Federal Government that aims to empower all Americans with secure access to their own health information.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) launched the Blue Button initiative, with the support of the White House, to give veterans the ability to access and download their medical records from their MyHealtheVet online portal. Blue Button has expanded to other Federal agencies and the private sector. To date, more than 5.4 million veterans have downloaded their "Blue Button" information and more than 500 private-sector companies and organizations have pledged their support to increase patient access to and use of their own health data as a way to empower patients and consumers to better manage their health and coordinate their healthcare. Today, more than 150 million Americans are able to access their own electronic health information from a variety of sources including healthcare providers, healthcare insurance companies, medical labs, and state health information networks. This number is expected to grow substantially as a result of major progress made toward realizing the Blue Button vision.

Blue Button Key Milestones

- **2010**: VA launches Blue Button on its MyHealtheVet patient portal.
- **2012**: The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services takes on the responsibility for coordinating Blue Button strategy and nationwide growth.
- **2013**: Announcement of Blue Button+, an expansion of Blue Button to include a standardized, machine-readable data format and additional functionality for the trusted, automated exchange of healthcare data. Release of the Blue Button+ implementation guide (www.bluebuttonplus.org), a toolkit designed for clinical data holders and third party application developers interested in implementing this functionality. (these two sentences could probably be collapsed into one)
- **2013**: ONC conducts Blue Button+ pilots with the objective of enabling the secure, electronic exchange of patient health records from any healthcare provider participating in the pilot to a patient through a third party application or personal health record. http://wiki.siframework.org/BlueButton+Plus+-+Pull+Workgroup
- **2013**: ONC issues Blue Button+ challenges for technology developers/ designers resulting in 17 new Blue Button+ compatible healthcare apps. ONC also facilitated developer forums for over 350 entrepreneurs implementing Blue Button+.

- **2013**: Addition of new and expanded sources of Blue Button data—including standardized claims data from large private health insurance companies, clinical trial data through a first-of-its-kind clinical trials matching platform, and diagnostic lab data.

- **2014**: Implementation of Blue Button through new Stage 2 requirements of Meaningful Use goes into effect, a government incentive program that encourages eligible healthcare providers to support Blue Button by giving their patients the ability to view, download and share their health information electronically. This program includes half of eligible physicians and more than 80 percent of hospitals.

- **February 2014**: Going forward, a priority for the Blue Button initiative in 2014 is to expand its scope to include personal healthcare information from retail pharmacy chains, ultimately with the addition of standard data formats. Creating a standard machine-readable format can enable Americans to securely transmit their pharmacy records using new innovative software applications and services that can improve medication adherence, reduce dosing errors, prevent adverse drug interactions, and save lives.