



Help Us Stop Information Blocking

The Department of Health and Human Services is working to identify and stop instances of information blocking. You can help by reporting complaints about information blocking to us here: healthITcomplaints@HHS.gov.

What is information blocking? Information blocking (or data blocking) occurs when individuals or entities — such as healthcare providers or IT vendors — knowingly and unreasonably interfere with the exchange or use of electronic health information.¹ Information blocking is a serious problem because it can prevent timely access to information needed to manage patients' health conditions and coordinate their care. Further, it can prevent information from being used to improve health, make care more affordable, and research new treatments and cures.

Identifying information blocking: Information blocking can happen as a result of overt actions or policies that prevent electronic health information from being appropriately shared or used for authorized purposes. It can also occur in more subtle ways, such as through contract terms, organizational policies, or technical limitations that discourage or make it unnecessarily costly or burdensome to share and use information. Not all actions that impede the exchange or use of electronic health information constitute information blocking: sometimes the “blocking” may be necessary to protect patient safety, privacy, or other compelling interests.



Some examples of conduct that may raise information blocking concerns include:

- Fees are imposed that make exchanging electronic health information cost prohibitive.
- An organization's policies or contractual arrangements prevent sharing or limit how information is shared with patients or their healthcare providers.
- The HIPAA Privacy Rule is inappropriately cited as a reason not to share information.
- Healthcare providers or IT vendors limit or discourage sharing information with other providers or with users of other IT systems.
- Technology is designed or implemented in non-standard ways that lessen the ability to exchange and use information with other IT systems, services, or applications that follow nationally recognized standards.
- Patients or healthcare providers become “locked in” to a particular technology or healthcare network because their electronic health information is not portable.

Help us stop information blocking and move toward nationwide interoperability by reporting information blocking via <http://www.healthIT.gov/healthITcomplaints> or via email at healthITcomplaints@hhs.gov.

NOTICE: Depending on the nature of your complaint, we may contact you for additional information and, in some instances, may share the information you provide with other appropriate federal and state government agencies, officials, and authorities. Please note that while we will endeavor to keep the information you share with us confidential, federal or state laws may require us to disclose certain information in some circumstances. While legal and administrative constraints prevent us from responding to every complaint, all information is carefully reviewed and shared with appropriate officials. Your feedback is appreciated and helps us to improve our awareness and ability to address health IT-related issues and challenges.

¹ Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, *Report to Congress on Health Information Blocking* (April 2015), available at https://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/reports/info_blocking_040915.pdf.