



The Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement

Highlights for Health Information Networks, Exchanges, and Health IT Developers

What is the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement?

The Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA) will outline a policy and technical approach to enable nationwide exchange of electronic health information across disparate health information networks (HINs). The development of the TEFCA is mandated by the [21st Century Cures Act](#).

For a variety of stakeholders — including patients, providers, developers, and HINs — the TEFCA is designed to provide a single on-ramp to nationwide connectivity that can support secure electronic health information exchange.

Once finalized, the TEFCA will give patients, health care providers, payers, HINs, health IT developers, and other stakeholders access to data when and where it's needed to better support patient care.



How does the TEFCA work?

- The Trusted Exchange Framework describes high-level principles that networks should adhere to for trusted exchange. The Common Agreement is a legal agreement that will enable network-to-network data sharing.
- Health care providers, patients, payers, state agencies, public health professionals, and other stakeholders will be able to use the policies, technical specifications, and network connectivity requirements of the Common Agreement to send and receive electronic health information seamlessly.
- Currently, stakeholders often must join multiple networks to get the information they need to support patient care. In contrast, joining a HIN that participates in the network created by the Common Agreement will enable access to and exchange of information from varied sources.
- Participants in the network will be able to exchange electronic health information for specific health care purposes, including for treatment, quality improvement, public health, and patient access.
- HINs and health IT developers will have a variety of options for participating in the Common Agreement, including by joining an existing HIN that meets the requirements of the Common Agreement or by forming their own Qualified HIN (QHIN).
- To help ensure that rules to enable seamless exchange are in place, HINs and health IT developers will need to modify existing data use agreements in order to flow down certain obligations for exchanging data to their network participants.



(Continued)



Things to know

The TEFCA takes a flexible approach to ensuring that data can be efficiently exchanged while also protecting privacy and security.

The TEFCA will set principles and minimum requirements to enable the appropriate sharing of electronic health information between networks in order to:

- **Increase secure and appropriate access to data**, which will better support existing use cases that HINs and health IT developers have enabled for their users.
- **Ensure that a core set of data will be available** among networks connected through the Common Agreement for the following exchange purposes: treatment, individual access services, public health, benefits determination, a subset of the HIPAA-defined payment activities (utilization review), and a subset of the HIPAA-defined health care operations (quality assessment and improvement, business planning and development).
- **Decrease costs and improve efficiency** by reducing or eliminating the need to join multiple HINs and multiple legal agreements, or the need to create one-off, point-to-point interfaces.
- **Provide HINs and health IT developers with a common set of privacy and security requirements** for the purpose of protecting patient data, including requirements on identity proofing and authentication.



How can HINs and health IT developers comment on the TEFCA?

To comment on the Trusted Exchange Framework Draft 2, the Minimum Required Terms and Conditions Draft 2 for the future Common Agreement, and the QHIN Technical Framework Draft 1, please visit www.healthit.gov/TEFCA.

