



The Network to Develop a Statewide Plan for Integrated Physical & Behavioral HIE

The Network, Arizona's statewide HIE operated by Arizona Health-e Connection (AzHeC), has begun the development of a statewide plan to integrate physical and behavioral health information exchange (HIE) under one infrastructure. This effort, funded by the State of Arizona in collaboration with the Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs), aims to incorporate work that has been done to date by The Network, the RBHAs and Behavioral Health Information Network of Arizona (BHINAZ) to facilitate the secure sharing of patient information by behavioral and medical health care providers. While the plan will outline considerable detail on marketing and messaging, sustainability, participation and connectivity costs as well as implementation timelines, the overall objective will be to develop a single statewide HIE infrastructure for the sharing of physical and behavioral health information with a single participation fee for physical and behavioral health providers.

The goal ultimately is to improve quality and outcomes for Arizona patients who receive physical and behavioral health care, according to Tom Betlach, Director of AHCCCS. "There is clear value in integrating physical and behavioral health information to allow providers access to more complete records on their patients," Betlach said. "This plan will build on the work that has been done by The Network, BHINAZ, the RBHAs and the State of Arizona to enable the secure sharing of physical and behavioral health through one HIE infrastructure. As we move toward an integrated delivery system, we need to have an HIE that supports providers in developing integrated delivery service models."

The plan will be designed to contain these essential elements:

- A single HIE infrastructure managed by The Network;
- One marketing, communications and messaging strategy for the integrated HIE for all physical and behavioral services; and
- One financial model that encompasses a single fee for both physical and behavioral health care stakeholders to sustain the integrated physical and behavioral health network.

The State is supporting the development of a single statewide HIE built on The Network for a variety of reasons. As a part of AzHeC, The Network's non-profit governance structure is transparent and broad-based, led by providers, payers and the community. Under this governance model, providers representing the full continuum of care have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of developing this important infrastructure. Nationally, the sustainability of HIEs is a very difficult operational challenge. Therefore, Arizona must support a single, sustainable, integrated, transparent Network with an appropriate governance structure where all providers have an ownership stake.

The Network is utilizing nationally known subject-matter experts and consultants to assist in the development of the plan. The integrated statewide plan is expected to be complete by the end of this year. The plan with results, findings and recommendations will be submitted to the State for review and approval. As part of this process, the State of Arizona will evaluate opportunities to cover some of the provider connectivity and operating costs similar to a current program that provides HIE connectivity funding for hospitals and FQHCs. Funding of this nature helps to offset the cost of HIE connectivity for Network participants; as a result, the AzHeC and Network Boards recently approved the elimination of participation fees for community providers in 2016. Look for more information and updates on this plan in Updates and Alerts from AzHeC.

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