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1. What is HIE Ready?

HIE Ready is a set of consensus standards and specifications that are available in many electronic health records (EHR) and health information exchange (HIE) systems today that enables them to exchange health information critical for care delivery. HIE Ready is consistent with Stage 1 Meaningful Use and the current version of the federal Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology Authorized Testing and Certification Bodies (ONC-ATCB) for EHR technology. It also will be consistent with Stage 2 Meaningful Use and 2014 ONC-ATCB certification criteria.
2. **Why is HIE Ready needed?**
   The cost and time it takes to implement bi-directional interfaces between with EHRs is a major hurdle for providers. Meaningful Use provisions for Stage 1 and Stage 2 require some HIE capabilities. However, those requirements are limited and do not cover the full range of interoperability and interface features needed for robust HIE. Therefore, specifying a certified EHR is not enough to ensure it can also exchange the information you need. **HIE Ready** provides a way for providers to examine what capabilities a vendor’s product has, what capabilities a Health Information Organization (HIO) offers, and/or permits providers to specify that they want full interoperability with their EHR.

3. **Do all EHRs have HIE Ready capabilities? If so, why aren’t they in use?**
   While most EHR systems may include the capacity to share the information specified in **HIE Ready**, it may be available through a complex list of optional components. **HIE Ready** gives providers a clear way to specify the EHR features needed for health information exchange. It also helps providers know how much interoperability will cost.

4. **Why is a Buyers’ Guide needed?**
   The Buyers’ Guide helps providers choose an ambulatory EHR, inpatient EHR, or HIE supplier best-suited to their practice environment. The Guide allows providers to accurately compare essential interoperability features among the EHR vendors participating in **HIE Ready**.

5. **Why would there be an extra cost if HIE Ready capabilities already exist?**
   Some EHRs include HIE capacities as a standard part of their products. Some EHR vendors, however, include interoperability as an option. **HIE Ready** specifies what full HIE capabilities are, but it does not require that a vendor include them in their product for free.

6. **Is HIE Ready downloadable software?**
   No, **HIE Ready** describes a set of interfaces, based on HL7 standards, that should be active in an EHR to enable essential HIE capability today. Participants identify what elements among those CHeQ has specified that are currently included in their EHR product and the cost of those elements to their customers.

7. **What are the advantages of an EHR with the features promoted by HIE Ready?**
   **HIE Ready** provides a set of uniform requirements for interoperability. It reduces variation of interface requirements, reduces the time required to deliver customized interfaces, and reduces the cost of those interfaces.

8. **Is HIE Ready a replacement for Meaningful Use of EHR certification?**
   No. **HIE Ready** is consistent with Stage 1 and Stage 2 Meaningful Use provisions, and certification criteria for the ONC-ACTB certification program. However, it specifies
additional important standards and capabilities that are not spelled out in Meaningful Use or EHR certification.

9. I’ve heard about the EHR | HIE Interoperability Workgroup. Is HIE Ready a replacement?
No. The EHR | HIE Interoperability Workgroup is a collaboration of states and vendors specifying the next generation of health information exchange standards. This is important work, but won’t be available in products for some time. HIE Ready concentrates on current standards and what is available in vendor products today.

10. Can’t providers already exchange health information between any certified EHRs?
Not necessarily. Having a certified EHR does not necessarily lead to true HIE. A certified EHR may be able to share some important health information only through fax or scanning. Other certified EHRs offer electronic exchange as a large menu of options. HIE Ready provides clear information on the interoperability and interface features that should be in place to facilitate HIE today and are available in vendor products. It also gives providers a simple way to ask for the interfaces they need by specifying HIE Ready.

11. Won’t the Direct Project solve this problem?
The federal government’s Direct Project offers a way to quickly connect providers regardless of whether they have an electronic health record. Direct enables point-to-point sending and receiving of health information between providers even if they don’t have an EHR. While useful and a critical part of ONC’s HIE initiative, Direct is limited to pushing information out, but does not actually establish HIE beyond transferring documents via secure email.

12. Are the Regional Extension Centers (RECs) in California participating in HIE Ready?
Yes. HIE Ready was developed in collaboration with CalHIPSO, which shares the HIE Ready goals and specifications with its preferred vendors and asks them to participate. We are discussing HIE Ready with California’s other RECs, HITEC-LA and COREC, as well.

13. Is participation in HIE Ready available outside of California?
Yes. Contact us at iphi@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu, with a subject of HIE Ready, and we will be in touch!

14. What does it cost to participate in HIE Ready?
HIE Ready is a volunteer program, and it does not cost anything to join.

15. If I represent a vendor, how do I get involved?
Contact us at iphi@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu, with a subject of HIE Ready, and we will be in touch!
16. If I represent an HIO/HIE, how do I get involved?
Contact us at iphi@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu, with a subject of HIE Ready, and we will be in touch!

17. How were HIE Ready standards developed?
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services defined Meaningful Use and ONC defined the certification program for EHR technology through rulemaking. The HIE Ready specifications represent an analysis of the technical requirements derived from Stage 1 and Stage 2 Meaningful Use, in line with ONC-ATCB certification requirements, and experience with the capabilities of current certified EHR systems. CHeQ took input from HIE leaders in California, members of the REC programs, and EHR and HIE vendors in creating the HIE Ready standards.

18. How are the HIE Ready capabilities assessed?
Each vendor or organization participating in HIE Ready is asked to fill out a matrix listing which of more than 50 interoperability capabilities its product(s) supports. These capabilities are grouped and categorized into the capability categories found in the Buyers’ Guide. A score for a category is calculated by computing the percentage of supported capabilities in each group, averaging the percentages for all groups in a category, and scaling the result from zero to four bullets. For example, there is one group of five inbound capabilities and one group of five outbound capabilities for the “ADT/Demographics” category for ambulatory EHRs: If a product supports three of the inbound and four of the outbound capabilities, its score would be the average of 60% and 80%, which is 70% = three bullets.

19. How are the HIE Ready relative costs computed?
Each vendor or organization participating in HIE Ready is asked to list the price for the HIE Ready capabilities they support. Some vendors include HIE Ready as part of the base cost of their offering, and their cost is $0. However, HIE Ready carries some additional cost for many products. For these vendors, the number of dollar signs is calculated by taking the mean price for all vendors as a score of 2.5, and subtracting one for each standard deviation below the mean, or adding one for each standard deviation above the mean, and rounding to the nearest whole value. A small number of vendors decline to set a specific price for HIE Ready, and their relative price is listed as NP (not provided).

20. What does it mean if the capability and/or price scoring for a product changes?
The HIE Ready Buyers’ Guide is updated each time a new vendor or organization joins HIE Ready, or each time a vendor or organization updates their product capabilities. If a capability score changes, it means a vendor’s product has changed. If a relative price score changes, it may mean that the vendor has changed its pricing or that new vendors have been added to the Buyers’ Guide changing the mean cost, which potentially changes each vendor’s score.