

# A Patient's Guide to Understanding Health Information Exchange



**CRISP**  
Connecting Providers with Technology  
to Improve Patient Care Across the Region

## What is Health Information Exchange and why is it important?

Health Information Exchange, or HIE, is a way of instantly sharing health information among doctors' offices, hospitals, labs, radiology centers, and other healthcare organizations. HIE allows delivery of the right health information to the right place at the right time, providing safer, more timely, efficient, patient-centered care.

Throughout the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland, CRISP—an independent nonprofit organization—is responsible for developing and maintaining the HIE.

The CRISP HIE allows the providers treating you in a hospital or doctor's office to access your medical history. For example, providers can review recent lab results whether the test was conducted at your primary care provider, the hospital, or participating labs across the region.

CRISP also supports a number of public health and quality improvement initiatives. For example, public health officials rely on CRISP to search for data when conducting communicable disease investigations. For quality improvement, including care coordination, CRISP works with health care providers to identify ways to better coordinate and deliver transitional care. For a full list of use cases and CRISP policies, please visit [www.crisphealth.org/ABOUT/Policies-Agreements](http://www.crisphealth.org/ABOUT/Policies-Agreements).

## What are the benefits of having an HIE?

Often, when providers need to share health information about a patient, the process is difficult and usually involves phone calls, frequent mailings, and faxes. Gathering health information on a patient can take hours or even weeks, and sometimes the information is not available at all. Errors are common. Through the HIE, providers have immediate access to important information. The HIE helps to avoid unneeded tests and procedures, medical mistakes, and costly medical bills.

## How is my medical information kept private?

Protecting patient information in the CRISP HIE is a priority. CRISP follows all state and federal privacy and security laws to protect patient health information. The Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy, Security, and Breach Notification Rules are the main Federal laws that protect your health information.

CRISP considers the privacy and security protections outlined by these laws to be minimum standards, and many of our policies go above and beyond what is really required by law. While there are many benefits to participating in the HIE, exchanging information electronically also has risk. Potential risks include: errors in clinical data, breach of information, and inappropriate use. CRISP is confident that many of these risks are mitigated by protections and security process that are in place. If you have additional questions



about the risk of participating in the HIE, please contact the CRISP privacy and security officer Brandon Neiswender at [Brandon.neiswender@crisphealth.org](mailto:Brandon.neiswender@crisphealth.org).

### How do I know who has accessed my records?

Patients can request a list of participating users that have accessed their medical records. Requests should come directly to CRISP and must include first name, last name, date of birth, and address. If a patient deems a user was unauthorized to view their records, CRISP will begin an investigation with the organization involved.

### Can I choose not to participate in the HIE?

Yes, patients can choose to opt out of the CRISP HIE. As part of receiving care in the District of Columbia or Maryland, your health information is available through the HIE to doctors for the purposes of treatment, unless you choose to opt out. Choosing to opt out generally means that providers cannot access any of your health information through CRISP.

In accordance with the law, Public health reporting, such as the reporting of infectious diseases to public health officials, still occurs through the HIE after you decided to Opt Out. Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) information, as part of the Maryland Prescription Drug monitoring Program,



is available through the HIE to licensed providers.

For more information about the CRISP HIE, visit [www.crisphealth.org](http://www.crisphealth.org), call 1.877.952.7477, or email [support@crisphealth.org](mailto:support@crisphealth.org).

You have several options for opting out of the CRISP HIE; you may select one below.

1. Visit the CRISP Web site at <http://www.crisphealth.org>
2. Call 1.877.952.7477
3. Fax your completed form to 443.817.9587
4. Mail your completed form to:  
CRISP

Chesapeake Regional Information System for Our Patients (CRISP) is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing the benefits of widespread, interoperable health information technology to patients and health care providers across the Region. CRISP is advised by a wide range of stakeholders responsible for the health care of the Region's citizens. We receive input and advice from patients; hospital systems; physicians; insurance providers; technology providers; privacy advocates; public health officials; and advocates for seniors, the uninsured, and the medically underserved. Our mission, further supported by our statewide partners, reinforces our commitment to creating a healthier Region.

**Chesapeake Regional Information System for Our Patients**

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