

The Referral Report Tool: Leveraging Data to Benefit Patients

VA patients often seek treatment from both VA providers and participating external partners. Effective communication between all providers within the VA patient's care team is essential for continuity of care, reduction of duplicative tests and avoiding clinical error.

A main goal within the Exchange Partner Management (EPM) team at the Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE) Program is to facilitate communication with partner/providers through outreach. This communication establishes a connection and begins the exchange of VA patient health information electronically through VA/DoD's Joint Health Information Exchange (joint HIE).

Identifying those participating external partner/provider organizations that treat Veteran patients at a high volume is key when determining which are most valuable for our VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) and patients.

To do this, the EPM team collaborated with the Integrated Veteran Care (IVC) Office to develop the new VHIE Referral Report tool, which provides both summarized and detailed data for referrals made within the past three years.

This insight into the top 100 participating external partner/provider organizations, based on the number of unique VA patients who received referrals, enables VHIE EPM to concentrate outreach efforts on high-volume external partnerships.

Amedisys, for example, is a nationwide home healthcare provider that operates in multiple states. Over the past three years, the VA has sent them 22,800 referrals for over 17,000 VA patients. In the last year alone, 11,000 referrals were sent for over 9,000 VA patients. They are the number three provider of VA patient care in terms of referrals, but only became known to VHIE EPM after leveraging the Referral Report tool.

When EPM targeted outreach to Amedisys, they learned that all the company's locations are using Carequality, a network that the joint HIE is working towards joining in fiscal year 2023. Once the joint HIE is connected to Carequality, VA providers will be able to exchange health information electronically with other Carequality participants, creating momentum for even more partnerships.

The Referral Report tool has also proven effective in its delivery of quantifiable evidence, which is often instrumental in an organization’s decision to connect with the Federal joint HIE. The tool delineates which of the VAMCs are making what referrals and to whom, allowing the VHIE Engagement (Implementation) team to identify high value participating external partners/providers for their respective VAMCs.

Additionally, it highlights specific regions that have fewer participating external partners/providers connected to the joint HIE and allows the EPM team to better target more potential partners/providers.

Since the Amedysis discovery, the EPM team has facilitated a warm handoff to our VHIE VA Direct team, which is now moving forward in working with Amedysis locations in Orlando, Gainesville, and Atlanta to implement direct messaging between VA and participating external partners/providers in these high-volume locations. This efficient and secure method of health information exchange is a win for our VAMCs, participating external partners/providers, our patients and for CIDMO.