

## The Commonwealth Fund States in Action: A Quarterly Look at Innovation in Health Policy

### **Rhode Island: Health Information Exchange Initiative**

The Rhode Island Health Information Exchange (HIE) initiative is a public-private effort to allow providers, with their patients' permission, to electronically access important patient health information from a variety of sources.

With initial stages funded by a five-year, \$5 million federal contract, the Rhode Island Department of Health is working in partnership with the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI), a collaboration among hospitals and other providers, insurers, businesses, consumers, academics, and state government that is serving as the governing entity for the initiative. Senior state officials play a central role in RIQI and the HIE initiative.

The sharing of data will be phased in, according to the following stages: 1) laboratory data; 2) medication histories; 3) emergency department and hospital discharge summaries, pathology reports, outpatient procedure records, and child health data; and 4) administrative data. Currently, a technology vendor is being selected, and development for the first two stages is expected to begin this fall. Three major sources of laboratory data, including two private companies and the Department of Health, have agreed to serve as initial participants. The HIE will then make patient-specific laboratory data and medication histories available to physicians and hospitals.

If funding is secured to continue the project beyond early stages (the state legislature has agreed to contribute \$6 million if private insurers contribute as well), the HIE will expand to cover more health information and be available to more users, including the public health department and consumers. The project has the following long-term objectives:

- Give consumers access to their health information, and enable them to decide when and with whom they want to share it.
- Use patient index functions to allow for unique identification of individual patients and locate where their health information is stored.
- Present data from a variety of sources in an integrated, patient-centered manner using a common interface, such as a portal or local platform.
- Integrate data into electronic health record applications and support the exchange of this data with others, as permitted.
- Provide decision-support capability.
- Aggregate and utilize data for public health purposes, such as population-based analysis, quality improvement, evaluation, bio-surveillance, and research.

#### **For More Information**

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**See:** [HIT Initiatives and State Government: Rhode Island's Experience, A Public Private Partnership](#)  
[AHRQ Report: Evolution of State Health Information Exchange](#)