

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2011

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SENATE BILL 375  
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE S375-PCS55195-SQ-6

Short Title: Facilitate Statewide Health Info. Exchange.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 21, 2011

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO FACILITATE AND REGULATE THE DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED  
HEALTH INFORMATION THROUGH A VOLUNTARY, STATEWIDE HEALTH  
INFORMATION EXCHANGE NETWORK.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 90 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new  
Article to read:

"Article 29A.

"North Carolina Health Information Exchange Act.

**"§ 90-413.1. Title.**

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "North Carolina Health Information  
Exchange Act."

**"§ 90-413.2. Purpose.**

This Article is intended to improve the quality of health care delivery within this State by  
facilitating and regulating the use of a voluntary, statewide health information exchange  
network for the secure electronic transmission of individually identifiable health information  
among health care providers, health plans, and health care clearinghouses in a manner that is  
consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, Privacy Rule and  
Security Rule, 45 C.F.R. §§ 160, 164.

**"§ 90-413.3. Definitions.**

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) "Business associate" is as defined in 45 C.F.R. § 160.103.
- (2) "Business associate contract" means the documentation required by 45  
C.F.R. § 164.502(e)(2) that meets the applicable requirements of 45 C.F.R. §  
164.504(e).
- (3) "Covered entity" means any entity described in 45 C.F.R. § 160.103 or any  
other facility or practitioner licensed by the State to provide health care  
services.
- (4) "Disclose" or "disclosure" means the release, transfer, provision of access to,  
or divulging in any other manner an individual's protected health information  
through the HIE Network.
- (5) "Emergency medical condition" means a medical condition manifesting  
itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity, including severe pain, such  
that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be



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1 expected to result in (i) placing an individual's health in serious jeopardy, (ii)  
2 serious impairment to an individual's bodily functions, or (iii) serious  
3 dysfunction of any bodily organ or part of an individual.

4 (6) "HIE Network" means the voluntary, statewide health information exchange  
5 network overseen and administered by the NC HIE.

6 (7) "HIPAA" means the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of  
7 1996, P.L. 104-191, as amended.

8 (8) "Individual" is as defined in 45 C.F.R. § 160.103.

9 (9) "North Carolina Health Information Exchange" or "NC HIE" means the  
10 nonprofit corporation selected by the Governor to serve as the subrecipient  
11 of grant funds from or as the State-designated entity named by the State  
12 pursuant to section 3013 of the federal Health Information Technology for  
13 Economic and Clinical Health Act, P.L. 111-5, Div. A, Title XIII, section  
14 13001, as amended.

15 (10) "Opt out" means an individual's affirmative decision to disallow his or her  
16 protected health information maintained by or on behalf of one or more  
17 specific covered entities from being disclosed to other covered entities  
18 through the HIE Network.

19 (11) "Protected health information" is as defined in 45 C.F.R. § 160.103.

20 (12) "Public health purposes" means the public health activities and purposes  
21 described in 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(b).

22 (13) "Qualified organization" means an entity designated by the NC HIE to  
23 contract with covered entities on the NC HIE's behalf to facilitate the  
24 participation of such covered entities in the HIE Network.

25 (14) "Research purposes" means research that meets the standard described in 45  
26 C.F.R. § 164.512(i).

27 **§ 90-413.4. North Carolina Health Information Exchange; requirements.**

28 (a) The NC HIE shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

29 (1) Oversee and administer the HIE Network in a manner that ensures all of the  
30 following:

31 a. Compliance with this Article.

32 b. Compliance with HIPAA and any rules adopted under HIPAA,  
33 including the Privacy Rule and Security Rule.

34 c. Compliance with the terms of any business associate contract the NC  
35 HIE or qualified organization enters into with a covered entity  
36 participating in the HIE Network.

37 d. Notice to the public about the HIE Network, including information  
38 and education about the right of individuals on a continuing basis to  
39 opt out or rescind a decision to opt out.

40 e. Opportunity for all individuals to exercise on a continuing basis the  
41 right to opt out or rescind a decision to opt out.

42 f. Nondiscriminatory treatment by covered entities of individuals who  
43 exercise the right to opt out.

44 (2) Develop and enter into written participation agreements with covered  
45 entities that utilize the HIE Network. The participation agreements shall  
46 specify the terms and conditions governing participation in the HIE  
47 Network. The agreement shall also require compliance with policies  
48 developed by the NC HIE pursuant to this Article, or pursuant to applicable  
49 laws of the state of residence for entities located outside of North Carolina.  
50 In lieu of entering into a participation agreement directly with covered  
51 entities, the NC HIE may enter into participation agreements with qualified

1 organizations, which in turn, enter into participation agreements with  
2 covered entities.

3 (3) Add, remove, disclose, and access protected health information through the  
4 HIE Network in accordance with this Article.

5 (4) Enter into a business associate contract with each of the covered entities  
6 participating in the HIE Network. In lieu of entering into a business  
7 associates contract directly with covered entities, the NC HIE may enter into  
8 business associates contracts with qualified organizations, which in turn,  
9 enter into business associates contracts with covered entities.

10 (5) Grant user rights to the HIE Network to business associates of covered  
11 entities participating in the HIE Network (i) at the request of the covered  
12 entities and (ii) at the discretion of the NC HIE upon consideration of the  
13 business associates' legitimate need for utilizing the HIE Network and  
14 privacy and security concerns.

15 (6) Facilitate and promote use of the HIE Network by covered entities.

16 (7) Periodically monitor compliance with this Article by covered entities  
17 participating in the HIE Network.

18 (b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the NC HIE from exercising any  
19 of its corporate powers in a manner that is not inconsistent with this Article.

20 **"§ 90-413.5. Participation by covered entities.**

21 (a) Each covered entity that elects to participate in the HIE Network shall enter into a  
22 business associate contract and a written participation agreement with the NC HIE or qualified  
23 organization prior to disclosing or accessing any protected health information through the HIE  
24 Network.

25 (b) Each covered entity that elects to participate in the HIE Network may authorize its  
26 business associates to disclose or access protected health information on behalf of the covered  
27 entity through the HIE Network in accordance with this Article and at the discretion of the NC  
28 HIE, as provided in G.S. 90-413.4(5).

29 (c) Notwithstanding any State law or regulation to the contrary, each covered entity that  
30 elects to participate in the HIE Network may disclose an individual's protected health  
31 information through the HIE Network (i) to other covered entities for any purpose permitted by  
32 HIPAA, unless the individual has exercised the right to opt out and (ii) in order to facilitate the  
33 provision of emergency medical treatment to the individual, subject to the requirements set  
34 forth in G.S. 90-413.6(e).

35 (d) Any health care provider who relies in good faith upon any information provided  
36 through the NC HIE in the health care provider's treatment of a patient shall not incur criminal  
37 or civil liability for damages caused by the inaccurate or incomplete nature of this information.

38 **"§ 90-413.6. Continuing right to opt out; effect of opt out; exception for emergency**  
39 **medical treatment.**

40 (a) Each individual has the right on a continuing basis to opt out or rescind a decision to  
41 opt out.

42 (b) The NC HIE or its designee shall enforce an individual's decision to opt out or  
43 rescind an opt out prospectively from the date the NC HIE or its designee receives notice of the  
44 individual's decision to opt out or rescind an opt out in the manner prescribed by the NC HIE.  
45 An individual's decision to opt out or rescind an opt out does not affect any disclosures made  
46 by the NC HIE or covered entities through the HIE Network prior to receipt by the NC HIE or  
47 its designee of the individual's notice to opt out or rescind an opt out.

48 (c) A covered entity may not deny treatment or benefits to an individual because of the  
49 individual's decision to opt out. However, nothing in this Article is intended to restrict a  
50 treating physician from otherwise appropriately terminating a relationship with a patient in  
51 accordance with applicable law and professional ethical standards.

1 (d) Except as otherwise permitted in subsection (e) of this section and  
2 G.S. 90-413.7(a)(3), the protected health information of an individual who has exercised the  
3 right to opt out may not be disclosed to covered entities through the HIE Network for any  
4 purpose.

5 (e) The protected health information of an individual who has exercised the right to opt  
6 out may be disclosed through the HIE Network in order to facilitate the provision of emergency  
7 medical treatment to the individual if all of the following criteria are met:

8 (1) The reasonably apparent circumstances indicate to the treating health care  
9 provider that (i) the individual has an emergency medical condition, (ii) a  
10 meaningful discussion with the individual about whether to rescind a  
11 previous decision to opt out is impractical due to the nature of the  
12 individual's emergency medical condition, and (iii) information available  
13 through the HIE Network could assist in the diagnosis or treatment of the  
14 individual's emergency medical condition.

15 (2) The disclosure through the HIE Network is limited to the covered entities  
16 providing diagnosis and treatment of the individual's emergency medical  
17 condition.

18 (3) The circumstances and extent of the disclosure through the HIE Network is  
19 recorded electronically in a manner that permits the NC HIE or its designee  
20 to periodically audit compliance with this subsection.

21 **"§ 90-413.7. Construction and applicability.**

22 (a) Nothing in this Article shall be construed to do any of the following:

23 (1) Impair any rights conferred upon an individual under HIPAA, including all  
24 of the following rights related to an individual's protected health  
25 information:

26 a. The right to receive a notice of privacy practices.

27 b. The right to request restriction of use and disclosure.

28 c. The right of access to inspect and obtain copies.

29 d. The right to request amendment.

30 e. The right to request confidential forms of communication.

31 f. The right to receive an accounting of disclosures.

32 (2) Authorize the disclosure of protected health information through the HIE  
33 Network to the extent that the disclosure is restricted by federal laws or  
34 regulations, including the federal drug and alcohol confidentiality  
35 regulations set forth in 42 C.F.R. Part 2.

36 (3) Restrict the disclosure of protected health information through the HIE  
37 Network for public health purposes or research purposes, so long as  
38 disclosure is permitted by both HIPAA and State law.

39 (4) Prohibit the NC HIE or any covered entity participating in the HIE Network  
40 from maintaining in the NC HIE or qualified organization's computer system  
41 a copy of the protected health information of an individual who has  
42 exercised the right to opt out, as long as the NC HIE or the qualified  
43 organization does not access, use, or disclose the individual's protected  
44 health information for any purpose other than for necessary system  
45 maintenance or as required by federal or State law.

46 (b) This Article applies only to disclosures of protected health information made  
47 through the HIE Network. It does not apply to the use or disclosure of protected health  
48 information in any context outside of the HIE Network, including the redisclosure of protected  
49 health information obtained through the HIE Network.

50 **"§ 90-413.8. Penalties and remedies.**

1 A covered entity that discloses protected health information in violation of this Article is  
2 subject to the following:

- 3 (1) Any civil penalty or criminal penalty, or both, that may be imposed on the  
4 covered entity pursuant to the Health Information Technology for Economic  
5 and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, P.L. 111-5, Div. A, Title XIII, section  
6 13001, as amended, and any regulations adopted under the HITECH Act.  
7 (2) Any civil remedy under the HITECH Act or any regulations adopted under  
8 the HITECH Act that is available to the Attorney General or to an individual  
9 who has been harmed by a violation of this Article, including damages,  
10 penalties, attorneys' fees, and costs.  
11 (3) Disciplinary action by the respective licensing board or regulatory agency  
12 with jurisdiction over the covered entity.  
13 (4) Any penalty authorized under Article 2A of Chapter 75 of the General  
14 Statutes if the violation of this Article is also a violation of Article 2A of  
15 Chapter 75 of the General Statutes.  
16 (5) Any other civil or administrative remedy available to a plaintiff by State or  
17 federal law or equity."

18 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2011.