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The Texas e-Health Alliance  
is committed to continued  
advocacy on local, state, and  
national digital health issues.



## TEHA POLICY PRIORITIES 2025

### PRIORITY 1 | Empowered Patients, Consumers & Caregivers

We support legislation that provides options for, patients, consumers and caregivers on how to take an active role in managing their health care information and enables them to be an active participant in their healthcare decision making across the continuum of care. This includes support for legislation that:

- Encourages patient-centered care and the use of personal health records, with an emphasis on improving access to patients' personal health data and ensures that state laws related to data sharing, collection, and patient data privacy are aligned with federal law whenever possible and that addresses any conflicts around these issues in state statutes.
- Enables access to the benefits of e-health and to reliable, adoptable, and implementable services, including broadband internet services as defined by the FCC, needed to facilitate e-health modalities. Existing infrastructure should be leveraged whenever possible, and first responders should receive prioritized access to resources in emergencies.
- Enables more providers, patients, and consumers to participate in clinical trials via health information technology.
- Encourages providers to effectively implement tools such as electronic medical records and health information exchanges to have more complete information available about the patient, if needed, as part of an e-health encounter. State policies should remove barriers to, and provide incentives for, data sharing among members of the patient-centered care team to support the provision of e-health and to improve care coordination across the continuum of care.

- Addresses the lack of uniformity and clarity around how patient consent is collected, for both treatment and sharing purposes. The system's inability to appropriately share data, by leveraging standards for interoperability and health information exchange, creates patient safety risks, causes duplicate tests and procedures, and keeps patients from being truly empowered and engaged in their own healthcare. Standardization of these e-consent processes will also improve the ability of providers to integrate consent management into their workflow.
- Educates patients and providers on the importance of data sharing with appropriate consent, leverages existing infrastructure while allocating new resources in ways that encourage accountability, and addresses all settings of care across the continuum of care.
- Reinforces that providers have an affirmative obligation to share patient data for treatment purposes.
- Enables the ethical use of artificial intelligence in healthcare in a way that promotes both maximum transparency and opportunities for consent for consumers in a way that promotes consumer trust in the healthcare system. All actors involved in the use of AI must take responsibility for their role in the development and deployment of AI technologies. Policymakers should be mindful of the different types of AI and develop regulatory approaches and standards that acknowledge the many contexts in which these tools are used in the healthcare system to improve patient outcomes.

## PRIORITY 2 | Strong Health Care Cybersecurity and Privacy

We support legislation that recognizes that the health care ecosystem, which is already highly regulated, must rationally balance the need for agile security responses against the requirement that patient care be efficient and appropriately provided. This includes support for a state level regulatory structure that:

- Focuses on education and sharing best practices at the state level.
- Provides incentives for compliance with state and federal security laws by state contractors.
- Creates an environment where contractors can still effectively and innovatively provide services to their customers while complying with state and federal law.
- Moves statewide public sector cybersecurity efforts in a more proactive and visible direction, focused on a posture of eternal vigilance. Every effort needs to be made to raise the profile of these initiatives, invest in cybersecurity response, and make sure that state agencies have the needed expertise and resources to keep their systems, and citizen data, properly protected.
- Positions the state of Texas to be opportunistic and supportive of efforts to improve cybersecurity of the entire e-health ecosystem, while recognizing the role of the federal government in healthcare privacy and security regulation.





### PRIORITY 3 | Iterative Delivery System Reform

We support legislation that provides for the broadest array of options in the delivery of care so long as those options do not create credible threats to the quality of care, patient safety, or patient privacy. State policies should prioritize patient access parity, allowing for patients to have equal access to health care delivery systems inclusive of e-health and in-person modalities, all within the standard of care. This includes support for a statutory and regulatory structure that:

- Ensures that state laws related to e-health, inclusive of mental and physical health care services, are aligned with federal law whenever possible unless federal law is more restrictive than state law.
- Evaluates and adopts the flexibilities that may be created as part of a response to future pandemics, endemics, and natural disasters, as long as they support the standard of care and documentation standards.
- Acknowledges that e-health technologies that promote access and reduce costs have become an integrated tool in the health care ecosystem that can help address the provider shortage and gain efficiencies in care delivery.
- Encourages Texas to adopt reimbursement policies that promote value-based models for both in-person and e-health services. All providers, (including behavioral health and post-acute care), should be encouraged to effectively implement an outcomes based reimbursement model. The model should tie to specific performance metrics, improve patient satisfaction, reduce costs, and achieve a higher quality clinical outcome.
- Makes strategic investments by state policymakers in expanding the provider workforce, both paid and unpaid, and the capacity of health professions training and education programs, with an emphasis on the need to increase the workforce in areas that put patients at risk, such as mental health and long term care.. The legislature should also make efforts to streamline and simplify the regulatory burdens and processes related to licensing, credentialing, and other administrative processes to further reduce the burden on the provider base.



## **PRIORITY 4 | Promote Appropriate Adoption, Regulation, Oversight, and Coordination of Healthcare Information Technology**

We support legislation that enables the efficiencies of free-market forces, constrained only by appropriate privacy and confidentiality considerations, to promote quality of care and/or reduce cost of care. This specifically includes support for legislation that:

- Supports the mission of the Texas Health Services Authority: to promote and coordinate the development of a seamless electronic health information infrastructure to improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of the Texas health care sector while protecting individual privacy.
- Promotes the widespread adoption and effective implementation of e-health data sharing tools in a proactive manner. This includes ensuring that information technology systems at HHS agencies that interface with provider systems using nationally recognized standards to facilitate data sharing, as well as appropriate program and data analysis.
- Encourages the HHS agencies to be full participants in state level health information exchange activities and actively seek opportunities to improve their programs and infrastructure through HIE. Agency projects like legacy system modernization and data integration should be driven through a strategic planning process than takes a comprehensive look at data and assets.
- Encourages innovation in health care service delivery and interoperability, shortens the time to implementation of new technology- supported approaches to program management, and enables the ability of digital tools to support value-based models and broaden market adoption of these tools.



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## **PRIORITY 5 | Grow the e-Health Workforce**

We support legislation that provides needed resources and attention to building a healthcare workforce for the 21st century and that embeds workforce development into the entire healthcare system. This specifically includes support for:

- Developing an e-health workforce in partnership with all levels of academic institutions in our state. Outreach about e-health careers should start at the middle school or high school level, and that outreach needs to be targeted, effective and accessible for students regardless of their access to technology.
- Providing continuing education to the existing and future healthcare workforce on new and emerging technologies and models such as artificial intelligence. Offerings will need to include everything from broad education on informatics and data analytics to micro certifications in specific topics. Upskilling, coskilling, and career extension opportunities should also be offered for the existing workforce to improve the effective implementation of technology by providers.
- Acknowledging that health information technology solutions can help address the provider shortage by gaining efficiencies in health care delivery. Our aging population, particularly in rural areas, and aging providers will require virtual and other technology solutions to advance and make the most of existing resources and bring new solutions to the table.

## **PRIORITY 6 | Development of a Vibrant, Competitive State Vendor Marketplace**

We support legislation that acknowledges the value that the commercial health information technology community brings to Texas, and that state procurement processes should be done in a way that promotes mutual trust, communication and collaboration. Procurements should be transparent, and agencies should make contract awards in a timely fashion and then move into an effective implementation of the work.

The legislature should expect vendors to be measured for performance, and the contracting opportunities should also be constructed in a way that allow for innovation and flexibility in the approaches being brought to the agency. The contracting environment should be collaborative and have clear, predictable incentives for performance and efficiency that bring value to the state, as well as ensuring that liability provisions in contracts are fair and proportional to the work being done.