



The Mass HIway Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

What is the Mass HIway

The Mass HIway was launched in Massachusetts in October 2012 by the State's Executive Office of Health and Human Services to enable the electronic transfer of a patient's health-related information amongst statewide health organizations.

Who can use the Mass HIway?

Currently, the Mass HIway is available to healthcare organizations such as hospitals, medical practices, laboratories, pharmacies, long term care and behavioral health organizations. The Mass HIway provides a secure environment where all users have to go through a verification process by the state before they can join.

Is the information I send over the Mass HIway secure?

Yes, information sent over the Mass HIway is private and secure. A message sent via the Mass HIway is encrypted so that it is readable only by the intended receiver. Even if someone were able to intercept a secure Mass HIway message, he/she would be unable to decrypt it or read it.

Does the Mass HIway store my health information?

No. A patient's medical record itself is not part of the Mass HIway system. The Mass HIway cannot see any health information sent over the network. The medical record is stored by the healthcare organization, the same way it is today.

How will the Mass HIway benefit my healthcare?

Currently, when doctors need to share health information about a patient with providers or institutions outside (or, even within) their organization, gathering and communicating patient health information can take hours or even days. Sometimes the information is missing or not available at all, leaving providers with an incomplete picture of a patient's health status. Using the Mass HIway is a faster and more secure way to share your health information with your healthcare community.

What happens when I give my consent?

Massachusetts has an 'opt in' law for the Mass HIway. This means that your healthcare organization needs to get your consent before using the Mass HIway for your care. Massachusetts chose 'opt in' to ensure that patients are given a choice and opportunity to have a discussion with their providers. With your consent, you allow your doctor to send clinical information to other providers participating in the Mass HIway.

What if I don't want to sign the consent form?

That's ok because it's entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to provide consent. Please note that if you do not consent for the Mass HIway, your providers will continue to send your health information using other ways, like fax or the mail. But that takes time and it's hard to control who reads a fax or opens a piece of mail, so your information may not always be protected. The Mass HIway is designed to make this safer and faster.

What if I change my mind?

Each healthcare organization will have its own process for you to change your choice, so speak with your doctor or the office staff to learn how.