

NYeC to Develop Social Determinants of Health Initiative

Christopher Jason

HHS awarded New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC) and a United Way of New York State subsidiary for their social determinants of health (SDOH) data initiative.

The New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC) and 2-1-1 New York, Inc. (2-1-1 NY), an affiliate of United Way of New York State, will work to [promote](#) patient data exchange through social determinants of health (SDOH) data.

This work comes as a part of the organizations' Social Care Referrals Challenge award granted by the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).

"We are thrilled to be partnering in this important work that is sure to benefit so many New Yorkers and further the mission of both 2-1-1 and United Way," said Mary Shaheen, vice president of United Way of New York State (UWNYS) and president of 2-1-1 New York.

The two organizations plan to establish a framework that supports patient data exchange and collaboration between existing networks and users. NYeC and 2-1-1 NY said the framework would create a statewide resource repository of local organizations and services to help exchange [SDOH](#) data and improve referrals.

"Vulnerable New Yorkers rely on resources and services delivered by community-based organizations, but those needs often go unmet due to the fragmented structure that exists between the healthcare and social services systems," said Valerie Grey, NYeC CEO.

NYeC [runs](#) the Statewide Health Information Network for New York (SHIN-NY), the New York statewide HIE.

One hundred percent of hospitals in New York and over 100,000 healthcare professionals connect to SHIN-NY. The HIE facilitates secure and confidential electronic sharing of patient data across the healthcare system. It connects regional networks, or qualified entities, that allow participating healthcare professionals, with patient consent, to quickly access and share health information and medical records.

2-1-1 NY provides individuals with a repository of health and human resources based on specific needs and locations. The organization said individuals could access these community resources online or by phone.

"Community-based organizations must be supported to assist healthcare providers with resources to improve overall health, reduce disparities, and increase wellbeing of patients and communities," Grey continued. "While several systems have emerged in recent years to address these types of needs, they are disparate and not interoperable. These are gaps we can fill so stakeholders can continue to innovate within this space for the betterment of our broader community."

This adds to the investments HHS has been making in health data exchange and interoperability.

Earlier this month, the agency [awarded](#) funding to two regional NY HIEs, Bronx RHIO, and HEALTHeLINK, to improve patient data exchange between the HIEs and immunization information systems.

Through this program, HHS plans to help public health agencies track and identify patients who need a second [Moderna or Pfizer vaccination](#) and also identify high-risk individuals who need to begin a vaccine regimen.

Bronx RHIO will use the funding to support public health agencies identify and track individuals who need vaccinations in high-risk communities, the HIE explained. The funding will also help the HIE improve COVID-19 vaccination administration, monitor long-term vaccine-related health effects across populations, and measure vaccination patterns based on social determinants of health.

With the funding, HEALTHeLINK intends to develop COVID-19 technologies to assess immunization statuses for individuals in Buffalo and several other western New York counties, the HIE said. The HIE will also deliver patient monitoring to vaccinated individuals and provide clinicians with COVID-19 EHR alert notifications for patient immunization statuses, hospital admissions, and COVID-19 test statuses.

HHS and ONC will distribute roughly \$20 million in funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Among other things, the CARES Act aims to support the country's COVID-19 vaccination efforts.