

# Getting Connected: Establishing North Carolina's First Community Health Information Exchange.

By: Yvonne Hughes and Jim Burke

The Coastal Connect Health Information Exchange was established in 2010 as a means of electronically sharing medical information and services between hospitals, physician practices, and other providers in eastern North Carolina. The project was created to enhance patient outcomes and physician collaboration by integrating regional health information systems.

After an extensive vendor selection process, CCHIE selected Medicity as the gateway for connecting its facilities. With the help of Medicity's revolutionary iNexx system, physicians can more efficiently streamline the delivery of care process while enhancing communication among the patient's care team. For example, during a typical referral process, a physician must complete a referral form, fax it to the specialist, and then follow up with the specialist's office to confirm they had received it. However, using iNexx, physicians can electronically send and track referrals, in addition to exchanging the patient's care documentation.

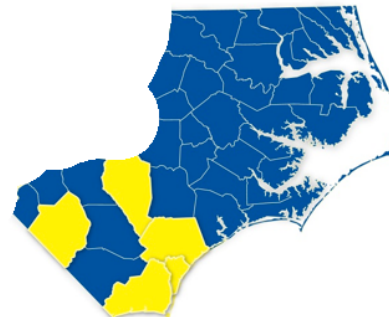
CCHIE has seen very positive results in both its testing and current production phases.

During the first three days of testing, CCHIE was able to connect and transmit patient referrals between 10 previously unaffiliated practices. At its official Go-Live, CCHIE had connected 5 unaffiliated hospitals with 17 unaffiliated physician practices. In August, 2011, the first live patient referral was sent across the exchange grid. Soon after, hospitals were successfully able to deliver results to participating physician practices.

CCHIE has been heralded across the North Carolina health care community. In early 2011, CCHIE in conjunction with Coastal Carolinas Health Alliance (CCHA), received an award from the prestigious Duke Endowment, a \$1.46 million grant commending its efforts for expanding the HIE across eastern North Carolina. With this endowment, CCHIE will add more than 140 provider practices to the exchange by October 2012, primarily in rural, underserved areas of the state.

The HIE is planning continued expansion in 2012 and plans to have more than 300 practices exchanging patient data by the end of next calendar year.

For more information, please contact Coastal Connect at (910)332-8014 or visit us at [www.coastalconnect.org](http://www.coastalconnect.org)



**KEY:**  
Blue = HIE Footprint  
Gold = Connected County