

North Carolina Health Data Utility Initiative

Background

North Carolina is in the early planning phase of developing a Health Data Utility (HDU), a framework designed to facilitate necessary data-sharing across healthcare and social service stakeholders to improve care coordination, while maintaining strict data privacy and security standards. While NC HealthConnex, the statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE), currently supports clinical data exchange for patient care, an HDU builds upon this by incorporating health-related data such as social service enrollment and service history across multiple providers. This approach supports a broader understanding of individual and community health needs while ensuring appropriate, role-based access to data as permitted by law. Each data stream is under the direction of a specified use case to ensure necessity and security.

An HDU can support:

- **Food Scarcity Screening:** Enabling primary care providers to determine whether patients who screen positive for food insecurity are enrolled in SNAP and refer them accordingly.
- **Pediatric Autism Service Tracking:** Allowing providers to access a child's service history across healthcare, behavioral health, and school-based services for better care coordination.
- **High-Risk Child Referral Management (InCK Model):** Giving care managers insight into a child's existing services, school attendance records, and protective services involvement to ensure appropriate interventions.
- **WIC Data Sharing and Enrollment:** Reducing unnecessary well-child visits by allowing WIC agencies to access clinical growth charts and lab results to reduce enrollment barriers.
- **Social Service Referral Tracking:** Helping providers track past referrals for housing, transportation, and other critical services to avoid duplication and improve delivery.



Fig. 1: The existing HIE structure is represented by the green circle, and we aim to meet the designation of HDU by reaching the outermost ring.

Engagement & Next Steps

To ensure the HDU effectively serves all stakeholders, we are reaching out to organizations across multiple sectors, including healthcare, public health, social services, and community-based organizations.

Objectives:

- Discuss the goals, structure, and governance approach for the HDU.
- Gather insights on potential use cases, challenges, and regulatory considerations.
- Explore potential advisory workgroup participation to help shape the HDU's development.