

The Liberty Alliance: Federated Identity in Healthcare

Today's healthcare environment calls for secure, cross-organizational information sharing on an unprecedented scale. A healthcare network must be structured so the right people have easy access to the information they require to make informed decisions. For example, when prescribing a new medication, a doctor should be able to review a patient's full medical history to determine potential drug interactions, side effects or allergies. In addition, under HIPAA requirements, healthcare providers must track and control access to patient information.

Establishing a common framework for interoperability among healthcare providers, insurance companies, pharmacies, public health agencies and even individuals will enable secure information sharing, protect personal health information, simplify organizational processes, improve system performance and reduce costs.

At the core of the movement to establish a common framework for interoperability is the concept of federated identity. Federated identity helps establish a virtual network of organizations and participants, through authentication and single sign-on across domains. In a federated environment, identity information resides "locally" but can be linked together to be used "globally."

The Liberty Alliance, an organization representing more than 150 organizations including leading banks, technology companies, government agencies, wireless providers and other entities from around the globe, was established to address these elements and tackle the twin issues of identity assurance and trust. As part of this work, Liberty Alliance is driving the development and adoption of federated identity specifications. The Liberty Alliance provides the means to build a common framework for the National Health Information Network.

The Liberty Alliance and federated identity can also help to provide considerable business benefits for the healthcare industry, including:

- 1** Enabling patients, physicians and healthcare organizations to safely share information without violating privacy
- 2** Reducing costs through a standardized, interoperable architecture
- 3** Establishing single sign-on across multiple applications
- 4** Protecting legacy investment for consumers and healthcare organizations
- 5** Improving physician and organizational performance
- 6** Enabling increased patient privacy and confidence
- 7** Aggregating data for public health, research and quality assessment
- 8** Improving connectivity among healthcare organizations and individuals
- 9** Increasing overall security
- 10** Reducing administrative burdens and errors
- 11** Enabling easier, faster HIPAA compliance
- 12** Offering healthcare organizations the ability to deploy new services or applications quickly and easily

For more information please visit:

<http://www.projectliberty.org/healthcare>