Break the Glass Emergency Access - Frequently Asked Questions

Break the Glass (BTG) emergency access allows specially-provisioned authorized users of eligible participants to access protected health information (PHI) in the health information exchange (HIE) without the patient's consent, but only in the event of a medical emergency.

To learn more about what Break the Glass means and whether your organization is eligible to use it, review the questions below. For further explanations or to discuss with a HealtheConnections Support team member, please call 315-671-2241 ext. 5 or email support@healtheconnections.org.

Is my organization eligible for Break the Glass access?

Does your organization routinely manage medical emergencies? If the answer is no, your organization is not eligible for Break the Glass access. Generally Break the Glass is only allowed for EMS services and hospitals that have an emergency department.

What constitutes a medical emergency?

A medical emergency is a situation in which the patient needs immediate medical attention, and an attempt to secure affirmative consent would delay treatment, increasing the risk to the patient's life or health. A provider can only Break the Glass to access a patient record during a medical emergency.

What criteria must be met before Break the Glass access is permitted?

By New York State Department of Health policy, the following criteria must be met for Breaking the Glass access to be permitted:

1. The patient is experiencing a medical emergency (defined above).
2. The practitioner or EMT determines that information in the HIE may be material for emergency treatment.
3. In addition, the user must be a licensed practitioner or EMT or acting under the immediate direction of a licensed practitioner to Break the Glass.

Is patient notification required when an authorized user Breaks the Glass?

Yes, anytime an authorized user breaks the glass, their organization shall notify the patient of such incident (within ten days) and inform the patient how they may request an Audit Log from HealtheConnections. For example, this information can be included in the discharge summary that is provided to the patient.

What documentation is required when an authorized user Breaks the Glass?

The nature of the medical emergency (e.g., "heart attack", "overdose") must be entered in the portal. In addition, if the authorized user who broke the glass is not a Practitioner or EMT (e.g., a nurse), the user must also enter the name of Practitioner who authorized their use of Break the Glass in the portal.

Is the Break the Glass activity audited?

Yes, anytime an authorized user Breaks the Glass, that access will be audited.

Who can have Break the Glass access?

Break the Glass access should be restricted to the individual(s) who provide emergency services at an organization (e.g., as an EMT or Emergency Department personnel). In addition, their access must be approved by the organization's RHIO Administrator.

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If the RHIO Administrator believes Break the Glass access is necessary for an authorized user, how does that user get access to Break the Glass?

An authorized user that requires Break the Glass access should fill out the online User Account Modification & Termination Form. If they do not already have a HealtheConnections' account, they will first need to complete the online Authorized User Request Form.

Can I see who has access to Break the Glass at my organization?

Yes, if you have access to the Active User Report for your organization, you can see who has access to Break the Glass. All RHIO Administrators and Audit Contacts have access to this report.

If I have any further questions, what should I do?

A RHIO Administrator should reach out to HealtheConnections at support@healtheconnections.org or 315-671-2241 ext. 5.

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