



Break the Glass Emergency Access Frequently Asked Questions

“Break the Glass” emergency access allows users 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 Customer Engagement Specialist, please call 315-671-2241 ext. 5 or email support@healthconnections.org.

Question: Is my organization eligible for Break the Glass access?

Answer: Does your organization routinely manage medical emergencies? If the answer is no, your organization is not eligible for Break the Glass access.

Question: What constitutes a medical emergency?

Answer: A medical emergency is a situation where the patient is in immediate need of medical attention and an attempt to secure an affirmative consent would result in delay of treatment which would increase 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.

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

Answer: 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 to 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.

Question: Is patient notification required when a user Breaks the Glass?

Answer: Yes, anytime a user Breaks the Glass, the organization shall (within 10 days) notify the patient of such incident and inform the patient how they may request an Audit Log from HealthConnections.

Question: What documentation is required when a user Breaks the Glass?

Answer: The existence of a medical emergency should be documented in the patient record. In addition, if the user who broke the glass is not a Practitioner or EMT (e.g., a nurse), the user must keep a record of the Practitioner who authorized their use of Break the Glass.

Question: Is Break the Glass activity audited?

Answer: Yes, anytime a user Breaks the Glass, that access will be audited.



Question: Who can have Break the Glass access?

Answer: Break the Glass access should be restricted to 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.

Question: If the RHIO Administrator believes Break the Glass access is necessary for a user, what should they do?

Answer: The RHIO Administrator should reach out to their Community Engagement Specialist or HealthConnections Support (support@healthconnections.org or 315-671-2241 ext. 5) and identify the users that should have this privilege.

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

Answer: Yes, if you have access to the HIE Usage Dashboard in myConnections for your organization, you can see who at your organization has Break the Glass access.

Question: How do I view my staff in the HIE Usage Dashboard?

Answer: Click on the blue 'CSV Export' button and select the 'Staff Breakdown' report in the dropdown. In this view of the report you'll see a breakdown of your Authorized Users and which of those users have the Break the Glass functionality.

Question: If I have any further questions what should I do?

Answer: A RHIO Administrator should reach out to your Community Engagement Specialist or HealthConnections Support (support@healthconnections.org or 315-671-2241 ext. 5)