

Effective Date: March 1, 2024	Policy Title: CMS Interoperability Provider Directory Application Programming Interface (API)
Original Date of Issue: March 1, 2024	
Last Revision Date: N/A	
<input type="checkbox"/> MHP <input type="checkbox"/> DMC-ODS <input type="checkbox"/> DMC State Plan	Reference to BHIN No.: 23-032

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure document is to outline the guidelines and steps for ensuring compliance with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Interoperability Provider Directory Application Programming Interface (API). This policy and procedure underscores Ventura County Behavioral Health's commitment to maintaining accurate and up-to-date provider information, fostering interoperability, and enhancing transparency in healthcare delivery.

BACKGROUND

In response to the transformative landscape of healthcare and the imperative to enhance interoperability, Ventura County Behavioral Health is committed to implementing the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Interoperability Provider Directory Application Programming Interface (API). This background statement within our Policy and Procedure document emphasizes our dedication to fostering seamless data exchange and accessibility of accurate provider information. The CMS Interoperability Provider Directory API serves as a pivotal tool in advancing healthcare transparency and patient-centered care, enabling our organization to contribute to an interconnected healthcare ecosystem. This policy and procedure framework underscores our commitment to aligning with CMS guidelines, ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of provider information, and promoting a culture of transparency and efficiency within our healthcare delivery systems.

To assist Ventura County Behavioral Health with meeting the requirements for CMS Provider Directory, Ventura County Behavioral Health has partnered with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) to implement CalMHSA Connex. CalMHSA Connex is a specialized platform designed to facilitate the seamless and secure sharing of behavioral health information among diverse healthcare entities as well as facilitate patient access to their data. This exchange is tailored to the unique needs of mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, enabling the confidential transmission of patient records, treatment plans, and outcomes across the behavioral health spectrum. Emphasizing privacy and consent management, CalMHSA Connex ensures that sensitive information is shared only with authorized individuals, fostering collaborative and comprehensive care. CalMHSA Connex aims to play a pivotal role in breaking down silos, enhancing care coordination, and promoting a holistic approach to patient well-being by providing clinicians with timely and comprehensive insights into a patient's health history, ultimately contributing to more informed decision-making and improved outcomes in the realm of mental health and substance use treatment.

POLICY

- I. Compliance with CMS Interoperability Provider Directory API:**
 - a. Provider Directory API shall be facilitated through the county's subscription to CalMHSA Connex. The CalMHSA Connex provided Provider Directory API is designed and implemented to comply with the [CMS Interoperability Provider Directory specifications](#).
 - b. CalMHSA Connex provides technology that the Ventura County Behavioral Health's provider data is made available through the API in a standardized and secure format, adhering to the [CMS Interoperability Provider Directory specifications](#).
 - c. Ensure the provider directory data is accurate, up-to-date, and accessible through the API.
 - d. The Provider directory API shall be updated no later than 30 calendar days after the BHP receives new information or is notified of any information that affects the content or accuracy of the provider directory. At a minimum, counties, in collaboration with CalMHSA Connex administrators will perform a regular update of the Provider Directory information every 30 calendar days.
 - e. Counties requesting utilization metrics and/or related reports must reach out to CalMHSA at connex@calmhsa.org. Please allow 5 to 7 business days for processing.

- II. Provider Information Accuracy:**
 - a. CalMHSA Connex will use provider data sourced from Ventura County Behavioral Health's SmartCare instance.
 - b. Data will conform to [HL7 FHIR US Core Implementation Guide](#) specifications.

PROCEDURE

- I. API Accessibility:**
 - a. CalMHSA Connex will make available a Ventura County Behavioral Health specific API for the purposes of connecting through qualified third-party applications.
 - b. Clients/patients are free to select a qualified application of their choosing to facilitate the retrieval of their data.
 - c. Said third party applications must adhere to specifications and guidelines of [CMS Interoperability Provider Directory specifications](#).
 - d. Third party application providers may reach out to CalMHSA Connex system administrators at FHIRAPI@calmhsa.org to establish authorized access to Ventura County Behavioral Health's Provider Directory API.
 - e. API and general information for CalMHSA Connex can be found on CalMHSA's website, www.calmhsa.org, under Health IT\Interoperability.

- II. Security:**

- a. CalMHSA Connex will implement encryption protocols in alignment with the [CMS Interoperability Provider Directory specifications](#) to secure provider data transmitted through the API.
- b. CalMHSA Connex will establish access controls and monitor API usage to detect and respond to any suspicious activities promptly.

III. Client/Patient Support:

- a. Clients/patients of Ventura County Behavioral Health shall be referred to the respective support of their chosen third-party application for assistance. Third party application vendors can then reach out to CalMHSA Connex system administrators at FHIRAPI@calmhsa.org to troubleshoot any potential issues with the patient access API.

IV. Ventura County Behavioral Health Support:

- a. Ventura County Behavioral Health end-users may reach out to CalMHSA with any questions or issues at connex@calmhsa.org. In relation to the CMS Provider Directory API, clients/patients should NOT be referred to CalMHSA under any circumstance. Please see section “III. Client/Patient Support” above for additional information.

V. Routine Audits and Monitoring:

- a. CalMHSA Connex system administrators conduct regular audits of the CMS Interoperability Provider Directory API to assess compliance and identify areas for improvement.
- b. CalMHSA Connex system administrators will monitor API usage and performance to ensure seamless access for clients/patients and troubleshoot any issues promptly.
- c. County requests for utilization data will be provided with within 7 business days of request. Requests should be submitted to connex@calmhsa.org.

DEFINITIONS

CalMHSA Connex: A health information exchange operated by CalMHSA catering to the interoperability needs of county behavioral health. CalMHSA Connex acts as an intermediary to facilitate data exchange between disparate parties utilizing industry accepted protocols and standards.

Client/Patient: For the purposes of this document, the term “client/patient” is used interchangeably with “patient” and refers to an individual receiving medical or professional services as outlined herein.

CMS Interoperability Provider Directory API: Refers to the application programming interface developed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to enable standardized access to accurate and timely provider information.

Provider Directory: A centralized repository containing essential details about healthcare providers, including contact information, specialties, and practice locations.

Interoperability: The ability of different health IT systems to exchange and use client/patient information seamlessly, ensuring data consistency and accuracy across various platforms.

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

N/A

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Page Number(s)