

Pledge Your Allegiance

Save to myBoK

Patient empowerment is only one button click away for thousands of Americans thanks to the growing Blue Button Initiative, a collection of data-sharing applications that connects patients to their records instantly.

The Blue Button Initiative, which healthcare providers and other healthcare stakeholders can join by taking the “Blue Button Pledge” on the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT’s (ONC) website, originated in the US Veterans Affairs Department as a means of helping beneficiaries access their electronic records from one centralized location. The initiative, which launched in 2010, has ballooned to include more than 500 organizations that have taken the Blue Button Pledge.

At its 2013 Annual Convention and Exhibit, AHIMA announced the launch of its own Blue Button Initiative awareness campaign, which challenges AHIMA’s members and component state associations (CSAs) to take the Blue Button Pledge and post the Blue Button link on their respective websites.

Blue Button has two pledges: one for data holders—those who manage or maintain consumer health data—and non-data holders. The pledge asks data holder participants to “make it easier for individuals and their caregivers to have secure, timely, and electronic access to their health information. We further encourage individuals to use this information to improve their health and their care.”

Blue Button asks data holders to make personal health information (i.e., complete health records and/or a subset, such as a visit summary) available to individuals and their caregivers in a secure, timely, and usable manner consistent with applicable law via one or both of the following methods:

- Download personal health information from a secure portal
- Send information to a personally controlled electronic health record (for example, via Direct or similar exchange protocols)

For non-data holders, the pledge asks that participants “engage and empower individuals to be partners in their health through information technology” through consumer education.

The initiative got a big boost from pharmaceutical stakeholders recently when chains such as CVS Caremark, Kroger, Rite Aid, Safeway, and Walgreens, as well as the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, the Pharmacy Health Information Technology Collaborative, and the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations all announced that they would be adopting Blue Button protocols in order to help patients take an active role in managing their medications.

It will soon be easier for individuals to access their information via Blue Button. ONC plans to release a Blue Button Connector this year that helps consumers find which providers, health plans, and other health data holders offer Blue Button.

For more information on Blue Button and to take the Blue Button Pledge, visit www.healthit.gov/patients-families/pledge-info.

Article citation:

"Pledge Your Allegiance" *Journal of AHIMA* 85, no.4 (April 2014): 78.
