



# Data Sharing Between Contracted Providers and DHS

February 2024

## DHS'S PHILOSOPHY ON DATA SHARING

DHS believes that the appropriate sharing of client information is essential to the provision, continuity and overall quality of care provided to DHS clients. By virtue of its role as a governmental service coordination and oversight entity — one that contracts and pays for services and must ensure the quality, coordination and continuity of those services — DHS requests and receives federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-protected data, including information about behavioral and physical health treatment, about clients served by contracted service providers. DHS may also re-disclose protected information for the purposes of treatment and treatment coordination. Both the Pennsylvania Mental Health (MH) Procedures Act and HIPAA allow for the unconsented release of protected client information for purposes of treatment and treatment coordination. Currently, DHS is not permitted to share information about substance use disorder (SUD) involvement and treatment.

## WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO PROVIDERS FOR CARE COORDINATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

DHS provides information back to providers through a variety of mechanisms (listed below). Information is provided at the individual level and includes information on involvement in child welfare services, prevention and family support services, publicly funded behavioral health services, criminal and juvenile justice (including jail bookings), public benefits, public housing and homelessness supports, as well as information from the medical examiner on overdoses, homicides and suicides. And because federal SUD information-sharing regulations are being revised to align their disclosure with HIPAA guidance, we anticipate that in the future we will be permitted to share this information to support care coordination.

## HOW CAN I ACCESS CLIENT INFORMATION?

### 1. Client View

Client View is an electronic human services record that provides information on individual clients and their service involvement across publicly funded services. Additional information includes demographic and contact information, names and contact information for other people working with the client, service plans, and assessments. You can use Client View when you begin working with a new client to understand how else they are connected to services, to help them reconnect with services they found helpful, or to ensure that a new provider can be identified if they prefer. Because of the broad and easily accessible nature of this system, DHS proactively audits access events in both random and targeted ways to verify with staff supervisors that staff members' use of the system is appropriate.

Screenshots of commonly used screens follow. More information is available [here](#).

FIGURE 1: Client information

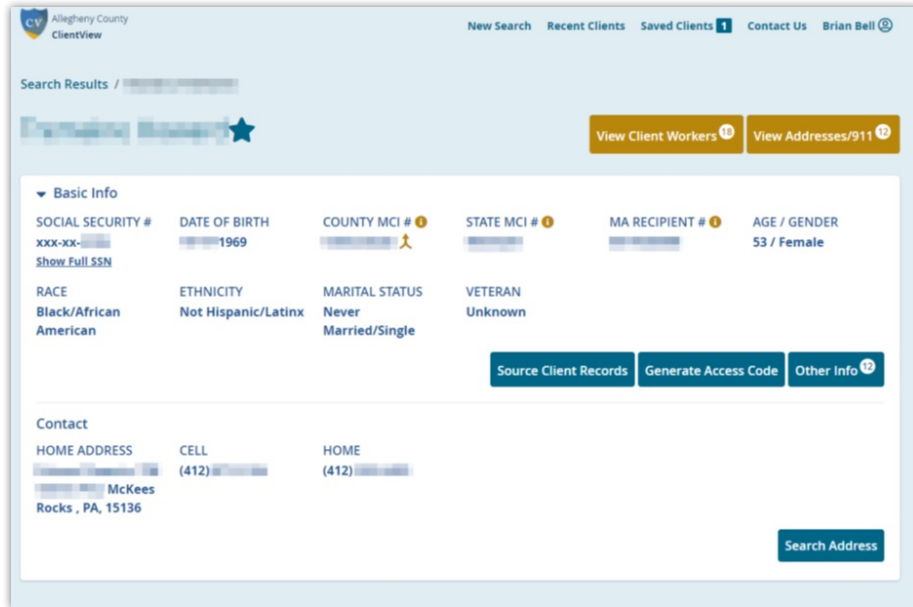


FIGURE 2: Services for clients

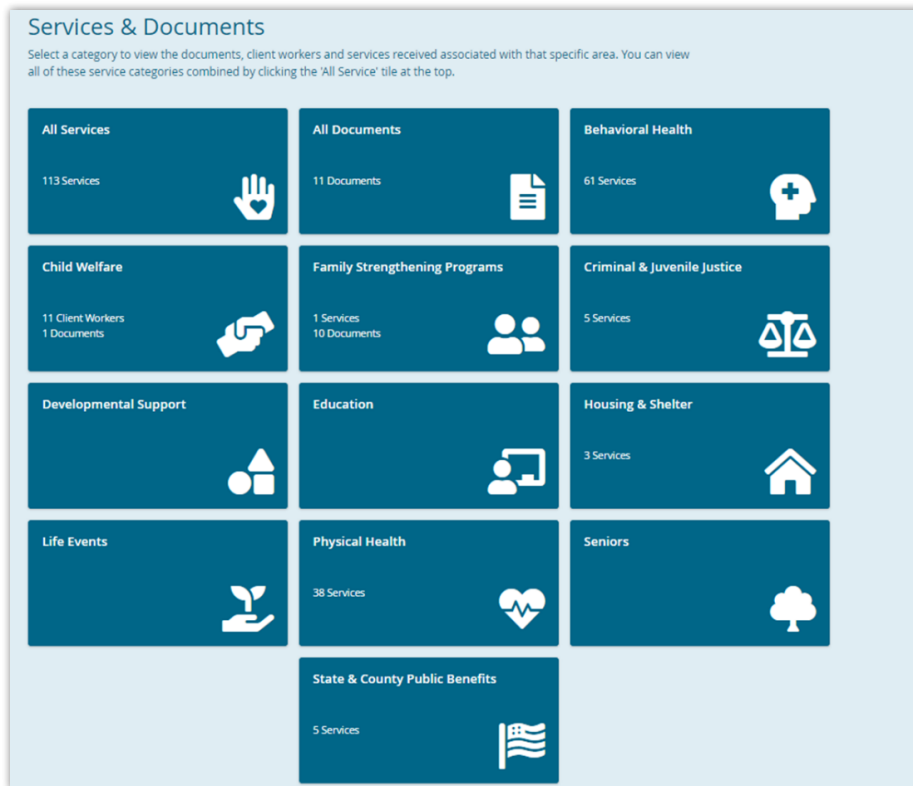
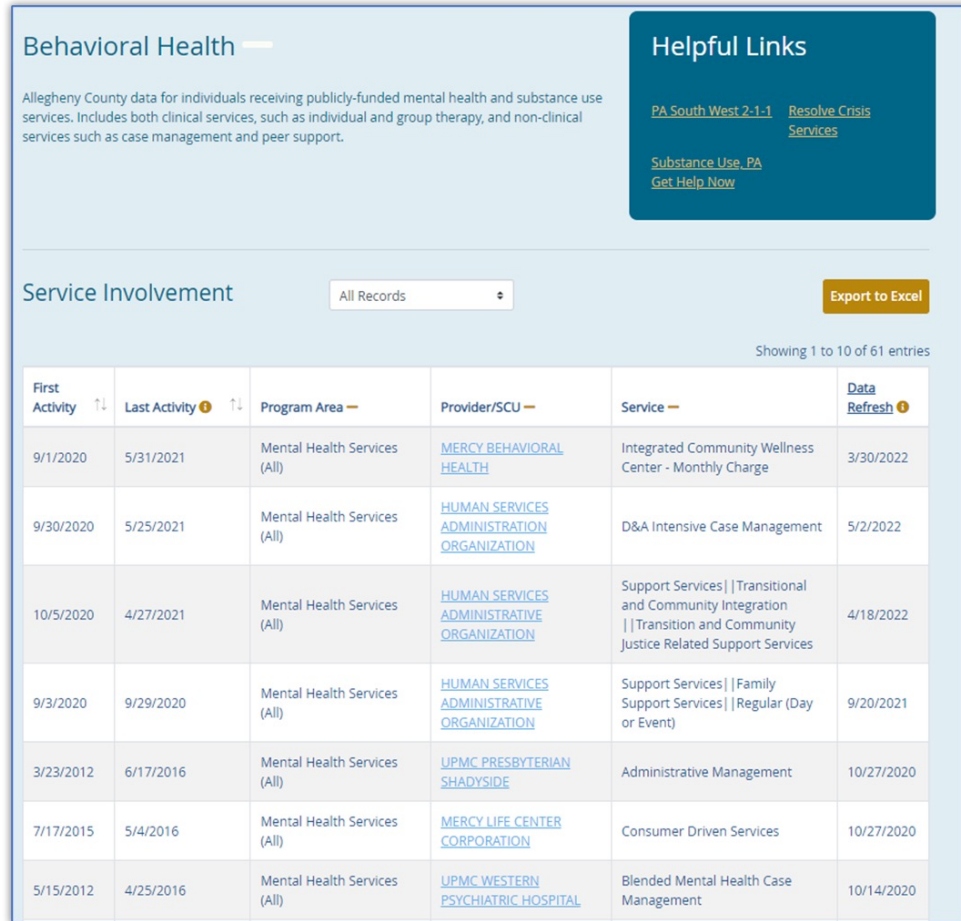


FIGURE 3: Service level information



## 2. Provider Connect

This tool is available to DHS providers and partners to allow DHS to easily share client information from the Data Warehouse back to their provider(s). Provider Connect was designed to help improve the quality and efficiency of services to clients and to assist providers with strategic planning and prioritization. Providers can view aggregate information on the demographics and service involvement of their clients; the tool also has the functionality to add program-specific outcomes. In addition, providers can use this tool to download information about their clients, including contact information and program involvement.

## DOES DHS HAVE ANY TOOLS TO HELP ME DOCUMENT INFORMATION ABOUT CLIENTS I AM SERVING?

### Client Path

Client Path is a Salesforce-based general **case management** application that is comprehensive, yet modular. It is currently available at no cost to DHS providers and, if used, no additional data-sharing mechanisms are needed. Client Path provides a robust client management system that supports capturing and sharing of vital information about the client being served and services being offered.

The system is modular and can be configured (to some extent) by DHS staff based on the provider's needs and on the intensity and duration of their services. Here are some of the features of the system:

- Captures client Information like demographics, relationships, contact and support data.
- Tracks both contracted and non-contracted services by both DHS and contracted provider staff.
- Creates and tracks client or household case management information. Modules within a service can be configured using the modular design and include Intake, Service Planning, Service Delivery and Assessment.
- Quickly generates various reports on clients, referrals, and assigned services based on program and provider needs to improve the efficiency of the referral or case management process.
- Easily shares information with DHS and other providers involved in the client's care.

## HOW CAN I SAFELY TRANSFER CLIENT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION BACK TO DHS?

If a provider is not using Client Path or another DHS-run case management system, providers can arrange to transmit individual, client level data using an FTP client to MoveIT, the County's secure file transfer protocol (SFTP) site, or Data Exchange, a County-developed web-based tool. While DHS's system and a majority of provider email systems today are secured through transport layer security, the security of the sending and receiving email systems is not easily discernible to the typical user, so DHS discourages the transmission of large data sets by email, preferring to use a secure FTP.

### MoveIT

MoveIT is the County's enterprise data transfer platform. This toolset allows DHS to securely receive data files of any type from providers. It is a web-based tool that provides authentication and secure encrypted transfer of files to and from DHS's external providers. If the provider has the capacity, they can fully automate extracts from their system into this platform.

### Data Exchange

Data Exchange is also a web-based tool that allows providers to directly upload data to DHS using Excel or comma-delimited files. **This tool allows the user to transmit the file directly to us, validate that it is correct, and then load it directly into the Data Warehouse. [Watch a demo video about data exchange here.](#)**

### **WHICH METHOD WILL WORK BEST FOR ME AND MY PROGRAM?**

DHS program leads/points of contact can, in consultation with DHS analytics staff, help providers determine the mechanism, the cadence and the specific data fields they will share.

Data exchange and MoveIT share many of the same attributes, including:

- User authentication
- Secure transmission
- Web-based platforms

They both accept data and sometimes more than one method will work. It comes down to the specific details of each use case. The key differences for providers are:

- **Validation:** Data Exchange validates the file and MoveIT does not. Data Exchange is almost always a better option than manual creation of spreadsheets, which leads to errors that we can never predict. Data Exchange allows us to validate that the format is correct before it is sent to us, which eliminates the back-and-forth of fixing errors on a file.
- **Automation:** MoveIT allows the data transmitter to set up automated data-sending routines. Data Exchange always requires manual upload of the file.
- **Timing:**
  - Data Exchange can be instant.
  - MoveIT will always have a lag.

Internal format considerations:

- Data Exchange only handles delimited files or Excel files.
- Data Exchange only loads the first file in a worksheet. We cannot use it if multiple worksheets need to be loaded.
- MoveIT can be used to transfer any file regardless of format.

### **DATA STORAGE AND PRIVACY**

DHS operates as a covered component of Allegheny County under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act/HIPAA, complying fully with HIPAA's privacy and security rules. As such, DHS has implemented appropriate administrative, physical and technical safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the electronic information that is created, received, maintained, or transmitted to and within the Data Warehouse. The data within DHS systems and Data Warehouse are encrypted at all times when at rest and in transit.