

EMR/EHR protocol

Frequently asked questions

Overview

Beginning April 1, 2021, for commercial plans, health care professionals with an electronic medical record (EMR) or electronic health record (EHR) will be required to allow at least 1 Preferred Lab Network (PLN) provider integration to the EMR or EHR.

If you do not have a PLN integrated into your EMR or EHR for lab testing, access UnitedHealthcare Preferred Lab Network and complete the EMR/EHR integration request form to identify the PLN you would like to use for integration. Please send the completed form to preferred_lab@uhc.com.

Additional integration details can be found on our Preferred Lab Network site on UHCprovider.com.

Frequently asked questions

Why does UnitedHealthcare require health care professionals to integrate a preferred lab provider to their EMR/EHR?

The Preferred Lab Network consists of currently contracted independent, free-standing laboratory care health care professionals that have met higher standards for access, cost, data, quality and service, based on a rigorous application and review process. UnitedHealthcare works with these distinguished labs in a continued effort to improve the health care professional and member experience.

UnitedHealthcare created the Preferred Lab Network in 2019 to establish a value-based care model with selected lab service providers. Participating labs may offer health care professionals and members improved quality, access and service at a lower cost of care. Focused on the Triple Aim, UnitedHealthcare selected the Preferred Lab Network provider based on a rigorous application and review criteria.

Members, based upon their specific benefits, continue to have access to labs that are part of our extensive lab network — even if they're not part of the Preferred Lab Network.

Members using the Preferred Lab Network may:

- Have lower out-of-pocket costs*
- Experience better service, shorter wait times and a higher quality of care
- Have access to test results quicker and schedule appointments online

Key points

- Your EMR/EHR needs to integrate with our Preferred Lab Network
- If you do not have a PLN integrated into your EMR or EHR for lab testing, you may complete the EMR/EHR integration request form to identify the PLN you would like to use for integration

Health care providers referring members to labs in the Preferred Lab Network:

- Won't need to do anything differently
- Can order tests electronically
- Will have access to physician-to-lab medical director consultation to support patient care
- May see higher quality and quicker turnaround times on test results

Will the health care professional be penalized if they choose NOT to allow the integration?

For the first year of this protocol, while we are assisting health care professionals in meeting its requirements, health care professionals will not be penalized for failing to comply with the protocol requirements.

Are there specific types of EMRs (Epic, Cerner, etc.) or all EMRs?

This protocol applies to all EMRs with the ability to integrate both ordering lab tests and receiving results.

What about hospital-owned physician groups that have their own labs contracted with UnitedHealthcare, but are not part of the PLN?

The protocol applies also to hospital-owned physician groups. At least 1 Preferred Lab Network provider must be available as an option to order laboratory tests within the EMR.

What does the integration process entail? Does it cost the health care professional any money?

Health care professionals completing the EMR/EHR integration request form and submitting to preferred_lab@uhc.com will receive an outreach by the selected PLN lab team within approximately 2 weeks. The full integration timeline will be dependent upon the factors of EMR selection, PLN lab and provider's existing EMR configuration.

The integration of a preferred lab into the EMR is facilitated through the PLN lab, the health care professional and their EMR/EHR. The cost can vary depending upon the EMR, provider size and any potential custom integration requirements. The responsibility for the integration costs are between the PLN lab, the health care professional and their EMR/EHR.

Does the health care professional need to inform UnitedHealthcare they have completed the integration and are compliant with the protocol?

There is not currently an attestation requirement. However, this protocol will coincide with additional lab initiatives and health care professional negotiations.

Does this apply to all types of health care professionals (groups, facilities, physicians)?

Yes. The protocol does apply to all types of health care professionals.

Does this change access for a member?

There is no change in lab access for consumers. Consumers can still use a lab that is not in the PLN. By integrating PLN labs into the EMR/EHR, a member will have access to more choices in labs through their health care professional. Choosing a lab in the PLN may lead to shorter wait times for services, online scheduling for patient service centers, higher quality of care and lower cost.

When we highlight labs participating in the Preferred Lab Network, UnitedHealthcare is providing members and physicians information about a lab provider's quality, access and potential cost. The Preferred Lab Network doesn't limit a member's or physician's choices. They can continue to use any lab in our network.

Services accessed through the PLN are at a lower average cost than other lab providers. For example, pathology services for a biopsy in the PLN would cost about \$90. Consumers could still choose a lab not in the PLN, but the cost would increase to about \$150. An out-of-network lab would cost more.

*As applicable, costs may vary based on the member's health care plan.