

## **Provider Directory and Patient Access API**

### **What is an API?**

An application programming interface (API) is a way for two or more computer programs or components to communicate with each other. It is a type of software interface, offering a service to other pieces of software<sup>1</sup>. Within the context of Imperial County Behavioral Health Services (ICBHS) this presents as a bridge between our Electronic Health Record (EHR) SmartCare and third-party applications requesting information.

### **Provider Directory**

As part of The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Interoperability and Patient Access Final Rule, ICBHS implemented a Provider Directory API in partnership with CalMHSA. The Provider Directory API allows third-party applications to access up to date information regarding healthcare providers and facilities offered through ICBHS. Through this API, beneficiaries can explore healthcare providers and facilities based on several factors such as location, specialty, language, and other criteria. For additional information regarding API documentation and third-party access requests, please visit the CalMHSA Connex API website [here](#).

### **Patient Access**

As part of the CMS Interoperability and Patient Access Final Rule, ICBHS implemented a Patient Access API in partnership with CalMHSA to allow beneficiaries to access their health information using a third-party application of the beneficiary's choice. For additional information regarding API documentation and third-party access requests please visit the CalMHSA Connex API website [here](#).

[Patient Access API URL](#)

[Provider Directory API URL](#)

\*These link requires the use of a third-party application that has implemented the required API elements; it is not viewable using a standard web browser

### **Application Selection Concerns**

As it is a requirement of the CMS Interoperability and Patient Access Final Rule that API's should enable beneficiaries to select a third-party applications of their choice, there are certain security and confidentiality concerns that should be considered when selecting an application to use.

ICBHS suggests that you request a Notice of Privacy Practices from the application provider. This will provide you with information on the application's privacy protections and rights. If the application provider does not provide a Notice of Privacy Practices, ICBHS recommends finding an alternative application.

You have the right to file a complaint with enforcement agencies including the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Most applications will not be covered by HIPAA which is overseen by the OCR. Instead, most applications will be covered by the FTC and the protections provided by the FTC Act which provides protection against deceptive acts (e.g. if an application shared your personal data without permission even though the privacy policy says they will not).

Individuals can file a complaint with OCR using the [OCR complaint portal](#)

Individuals can file a complaint with the FTC using the [FTC complaint portal](#)

For additional information on the Interoperability and Patient Access final rule, please see the linked educational reference below provided by CMS:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/patient-privacy-and-security-resources.pdf>

1. [API](#), In Wikipedia.