# NH Care Connections: Closed Loop Referral in NH

Connecting people to the right services—faster, more reliably, and closer to home

Department of HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

## What is a Closed Loop Referral System (CLRS)?

A closed loop referral system (CLRS) is a privacy-first, secure shared infrastructure that allows health care providers, social service organizations, and community partners to electronically refer people to services with their consent - and confirm that assistance was actually received.

With an individual's permission, a hospital, primary care provider, school, or caseworker, for example, can send a referral on behalf of their patient for food, housing support, behavioral health care, transportation, or other services.

- The receiving organization can accept, act on, and close the loop by confirming the outcome.
- The referring provider can see whether the referral was completed, which can reduce duplication, delays, and people falling through the cracks.

## Why is a Closed Loop Referral System needed?

Our health and human services systems are at an inflection point. While clinical care continues to advance, health care, behavioral health, and community providers still largely operate in parallel systems. Federal support for DHHS programs is often structured around funding streams and eligibility categories, rather than around the lived realities of individuals and families accessing our systems of care. Siloed providers, and the fragmented care coordination that results from it, create inefficiencies that affect patients, providers, and the state. As expectations rise to deliver better outcomes at a lower cost, New Hampshire needs a modern infrastructure that resolves these inefficiencies, improves access to services for individuals and families in need, lightens documentation burdens on providers, and reduces duplication of effort across state-funded programs.

## What is happening in New Hampshire right now?

New Hampshire is taking a deliberate, regional-first approach.
Right now:

- A pilot is underway in the Upper Valley, anchored by Dartmouth Health and local community partners.
- The focus is on getting it right before scaling - testing workflows, integrations, and community engagement in real-world settings.
- The State, community partners, and the vendor are working together on:
    - governance and accountability,
    - provider onboarding and training,
    - technical integration, and
    - clear communication to providers and the public.

At the same time, statewide readiness work continues in parallel, so progress does not stall while the pilot is underway. This approach reduces risk, improves quality, and considers lessons learned before expansion.

## How does this align with Rural Health Transformation?

NH Care Connections is a core component of the State's Rural Health Transformation (RHT) initiative, which will bring more than $200 million each year into New Hampshire to strengthen access, coordination, and sustainability of care, particularly in rural and underserved regions. In partnership with the Governor's Office of New Opportunities for Rural Transformational Health (GO NORTH), the CLRS provides the shared infrastructure that allows many RHT investments to work together in practice. Connecting primary care, behavioral health, community-based services, and social supports means that funding translates into better and more coordinated access to services closer to home.

## Why does this matter?

The CLRS ensures that referrals result in confirmed connections, not just attempted outreach. For rural regions in particular, coordination is essential when services are limited and travel distances are significant.

More than just a technology upgrade, CLRS is an infrastructure investment that helps New Hampshire:

- **Improve outcomes for people and families**
  Many health challenges are made worse by a lack of safe housing, transportation concerns, or not having access to healthy food to eat. The CLRS helps ensure people actually receive the services for which they are referred - not just provided a phone number or a list.
- **Reduce inefficiency and duplication**
  Providers spend less time tracking referrals manually and more time delivering care.
- **Strengthen local communities**
  The infrastructure is built around community organizations, respecting regional differences and existing referral pathways.
- **Support smarter policy and accountability**
  Aggregate data (not personal details) helps the State understand where service gaps exist and where investments are working.

## What makes New Hampshire's approach different?

New Hampshire is taking a deliberate, community-first approach:

- **Regional first, then statewide**
  Success is built locally and expanded thoughtfully, based on lessons learned.
- **Choice and flexibility for individuals and providers**
  Individuals are not required to participate and they can always choose how their data is shared. Different organizations have different capacities. The system supports multiple ways to participate.
- **In-person engagement and trusted partners**
  Local partners like Granite United Way play a central role in provider engagement and trust-building. All work is guided by a multi-sector, statewide advisory council.
- **Clear metrics and transparency**
  Progress is tracked through onboarding, referral activity, and outcomes, not just system build-out.

## What does success look like?

In the near term:

- Providers in the pilot region begin to use the system confidently.
- Referrals moving faster and closing more reliably.
- Clear lessons learned that inform statewide rollout.

Over time:

- A trusted statewide network connecting health care and community services.
- Fewer missed connections for people who need help.
- Stronger coordination across New Hampshire's health and human services system.

NH Care Connections and the CLRS represent foundational infrastructure, not a short-term program. It is a practical, community-based approach to improving coordination, accountability, and outcomes across health and human services in New Hampshire.