The **Alberta Netcare Portal** (ANP) is a vital tool in healthcare information exchange. In this Q&A compilation, we address common queries from healthcare professionals about ANP usage, patient privacy, authorized custodians' roles, and more. From appropriate access scenarios to data usage and disclosure limits, these responses provide insights into navigating the complexities of Alberta Netcare and its implications for patient care and information management.

If you have questions about the *Health Information Act* (HIA) or the rules for using Alberta Netcare, please contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310-0000 then the number to make the call toll free).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: **If there is a patient-health care professional relationship where the authorized custodian or affiliate is providing care for the patient, but the patient has not visited the medical office (as they usually do), would it be appropriate to check ANP to see the patient's status (hospital admission, deceased...)?**

A: According to section 3.1.2 of the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol, you may access ANP to provide health services when all of the following circumstances apply [emphasis added]:

A participating custodian may access and use information in Alberta Netcare when

a) *they are in a current care relationship with the individual who is the subject of the information,*
b) *they are providing health services to the individual either in the presence or absence of that individual,*
c) *their access to the information is necessary for the provision of the health service or for making a determination for a related health service, and*
d) *the information is related to and necessary for the current session of care.*

An authorized custodian or affiliate may view a patient's record in relation to some kind of on-going, follow-up care even if the patient is not present. Authorized custodians and affiliates are encouraged to use the contact information they have in their practice's own files to reach out to patients.

Q: **If an authorized custodian or affiliate has not seen patient for a few years but wants to know if she had a particular test done, can they access ANP for that?**

A: Authorized custodians and affiliates may use ANP if it is necessary to provide health services to a current patient (according to the terms set in the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol). If a patient has not visited the office in a few years, the authorized custodian must determine if a current care relationship with the patient still exists and if accessing ANP is necessary to provide health services to that patient. When custodians have a reasonable expectation that the patient will return for the provision of a health services at a future date and believe that a current care relationship exists, accessing ANP may be appropriate. It is not appropriate to access ANP when there is no current care relationship and it is not related or necessary to provide care. All access to ANP is monitored. Albertans have the right to access a copy of the authorized users who have accessed his or her electronic health record and the date and time of that access.

Q: **Do patients have a way to access their own Alberta Netcare health info?**

A: The right of access to one's own health information extends to Alberta Netcare information too. Individuals have a right of access to all of their Alberta Netcare records, and are able to exercise that right by contacting any authorized custodian (physician, pharmacist, registered nurse, optometrist, or Alberta Health Services)

with whom they have a current care relationship, and who has ANP access. The authorized custodian must provide access to all Alberta Netcare records, not only to records that the authorized custodian has created. The Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol (IEP), the document that prescribes the rules regarding Alberta Netcare, confirms individuals' rights to request access to all their health information available through Alberta Netcare. Specifically, section 4.1.5 says:

A participating custodian will, subject to the Health Information Act, release information in response to a request from an individual who is the subject of the information if they have an established current care relationship with that individual, the information can be provided using normal technology within the possession and control of the participating custodian, provision of the requested information would not unreasonably interfere with the participating custodian's normal operation of business, and they are not prevented from doing so by sections 11(1) or 11(2) of the Health Information Act, nor any other legislation intended to control the disclosure of information to individuals.

Albertans aged 14 and above can also access their health information through [MyHealth Records](#). This online tool provides a secure space to view immunization records, medication history, and most lab results from Alberta Netcare on computers, tablets, or smartphones.

Q: **When a new authorized affiliate with the practice accesses ANP at our site and they are doing it remotely, even though they are physically working at our site, must we register them?**
A: Yes, authorized users must be registered to every site where they will be accessing ANP.

Q: **What is the process for masking a record?**
A: Under the HIA, individuals have the right to make an expressed wish to their health service provider to limit the availability of their information in Alberta Netcare, thus ANP offers authorized custodians the option to "mask" a patient's record. All information about an individual is masked except for the first and last name, date of birth, gender, and personal health number. An authorized custodian or affiliate may access a masked record for a limited number of reasons, selecting which reason in a drop-down menu every time before the health information may be viewed. Providing treatment and care is one of the listed reasons. An authorized custodian/affiliate should discuss with the patient their concerns to determine if masking health information in Alberta Netcare is desired and appropriate. The authorized custodian/affiliate has the discretion to determine if a mask should be placed or not. A patient has the ability to ask an authorized custodian or affiliate to rescind a mask and the authorized custodian/affiliate has the discretion to determine if a mask should be rescinded.

Visit the Alberta Netcare Learning Centre for [masking information and instructions](#).

Q: **Is the whole chart masked or just certain results**
A: No, ANP masking is global in nature and masks the entire record, except for basic demographic information.

Q: **Can people who don't have masked records request a list of all providers who accessed their Alberta Netcare info?**
A: Yes, the ability of patients to ask for a record of who has accessed their health information via Alberta Netcare isn't dependent on users activating masking. All access to ANP is monitored. Albertans have the right to access a copy of the authorized users who have accessed his or her electronic health record and the date and time of that access.

Visit the Alberta Netcare Learning Centre for information about [audit logs](#).

Q: **Can we refuse service if a file is masked?**

A: Alberta Netcare rules don't inform your ability to refuse service. Follow your professional judgment and College standards of practice when deciding whether to refuse service. Masked records in Alberta Netcare may be un-masked to provide treatment and care to a patient, so the fact that a patient's records are masked, by itself, shouldn't be a reason to refuse service.

Q: Can you give an example of when a masking request could be a threat to public safety?
A: An authorized custodian or affiliate must use their judgement according to their professional guidelines to make that determination.

Q: If providing care for a family member, friend, neighbor, can authorized custodians or affiliates access their health record in ANP?
A: Consider your professional College standards of practice when providing treatment and care as they may define when custodians and affiliates may provide care to family members, friends and neighbors. Some Colleges prohibit health service providers from treating family members, etc. Authorized custodians and affiliates may only use ANP if it is necessary to provide health services to a patient where there is a current care relationship (according to the terms set in the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol).

Q: Can you look up your own information in ANP?
A: Generally, no, as it does not meet the criteria in the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol. Consider your professional college standards of practice when providing treatment and care to oneself. Looking up your own information in ANP will likely trigger an audit alert, so you should be prepared to explain your actions to your supervisor (custodian) or to Alberta Health.

Q: Can patients request that no information be sent into Alberta Netcare?
A: There is no ability for patients to opt-out of having their information sent to Alberta Netcare. Patients' health information is sent to ANP under specific legal authority set out under the HIA, not consent. Patients with concerns about the confidentiality of their health information may request that their records be masked.

Q: Can authorized custodians and affiliates access ANP info for someone who has died?
A: There are very limited instances where an authorized custodian or affiliate may access the electronic health record in ANP of someone who is deceased.

If you have questions, please contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310 0000, then the number to make the call toll free).

Q: Can an authorized custodian use ANP information for training and auditing purposes?
A: Alberta Netcare has developed a practice environment that simulates ANP information and functionality. Whether you are just learning how to use the system or would like to explore and discover new functionality, the training environment is the best place to develop skills. The Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol does not allow authorized custodians or affiliates to use Alberta Netcare data for training purposes.

Under s. 3.3, authorized custodians and affiliates may use ANP for practice self-audits under limited circumstances, and may only view the information which was accessed by themselves, someone directly associated with the practice who reports to them, or someone directly associated with the practice who does not report to them but which they have been directed to audit by the appropriate practice manager. Where the practice self-audit requires access to information which the self-auditor themselves did not enter or modify, the self-auditor will only access the information if they would otherwise have access to it while performing their traditional and usual role.

If you have questions, please contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310-0000 and then the number to make the call toll free).

Q: **When can we disclose ANP information to others? Can we provide info to a person who may legally act for a patient (e.g., through a Power of Attorney or guardianship for another person)? Can we disclose ANP information to Police?**

A: Under the HIA, any right or power conferred on an individual by the Act may be exercised by the individual, or by another person as described in section 104 which discusses power of attorney, adult guardianship and trusteeship, personal directives, etc. Additionally, authorized custodians may disclose ANP information at the request of, and with the explicit consent of the individual who is the subject of the information, or as expressly permitted under section 35(1) of the HIA (e.g., to a person who is responsible for providing continuing treatment and care to the individual, for the purpose of complying with a subpoena, warrant or order issued by a court, person or body having jurisdiction in Alberta to compel the production of information in Alberta).

If you have questions, please contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310-0000 and then the number to make the call toll free).

Q: **What is a privacy or information security "breach" and what should we do if we become aware of one?**

A: Under the HIA, a breach is any loss of, unauthorized access to, or disclosure of individually identifying health information in the custody or under the control of a custodian. For example, an authorized user who accesses ANP to view the electronic health record of any person outside of a current care relationship or otherwise not in accordance with the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol has committed a breach. An authorized affiliate aware of a breach of the Alberta Netcare system, information security, or privacy, must notify the authorized custodian immediately.

An authorized custodian aware of a breach of the Alberta Netcare system, information security, or privacy, must: remedy the breach, manage and mitigate the effects of the breach, develop a strategy for the prevention of a future breach under a similar circumstance, and notify the appropriate authorities, Alberta Health (as the Information Manager of Alberta Netcare). Alberta Health has established a privacy breach reporting protocol, the Provincial Reportable Incident Response Process (PRIRP).

Where there is a risk of harm (e.g., the information could be used for identity theft or commit fraud, embarrassment or physical, emotional, or financial harm could result), the authorized custodian must also notify the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the subject or subjects of the health information. As Information Manager, Alberta Health will immediately investigate any suspected breach of the Alberta Netcare system or information security, including contraventions of the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol.

Please contact the Alberta Health Security Team: **780-643-9343** (dial 310-0000 then the number to make the call toll free) or contact AHSecurity@gov.ab.ca.

Q: **If a medical/resident/pharmacy/nurse practitioner student with ANP access from the hospital is shadowing at our clinic and needs to access ANP as part of their placement, do they need to be registered? What about locum physicians or relief pharmacists?**

A: Yes. ANP is Custodian-based registration, which means that end users need to be registered at each facility they require ANP access from.

Q: **Should we return the RSA SecurID token if a staff member leaves the organization?**

A: RSA SecurID tokens are assigned to the individual, not the facility. Even though authorized users may use a single fob for access at multiple sites, they must be registered every site where they access ANP. Authorized custodians must ensure that their authorized affiliates are not using remote access tokens or fobs at multiple

sites unless the authorized user is registered appropriately. If the authorized user is leaving his or her health role in Alberta, then the token should be returned to:

RSA Remote Token Support
CN Tower
16th Floor
10004 104 Ave NW
Edmonton AB T5J 0K1

Q: **Do we need to complete a pORA more often or only once?**
A: You should regularly review your pORA and update it when you experience significant organizational or information technology changes, for example, if the custodians at your organization changes or the office falls under new ownership, or you adopt a new EMR or PMS.

Q: **When can authorized custodians use ANP for research purposes?**
A: Custodians and affiliates are subject to the HIA for the use of health information for research purposes. Under the HIA and the Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol, there are additional rules for the use and disclosure of information from Alberta Netcare for research purposes (e.g., obtaining consent).

Note that only two authorized custodians, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, are permitted to use ANP for research purposes (HIA section 56.5(1)(a)). ANP users who are not affiliates of AHS are not permitted to use ANP for research purposes (as per HIA section 56.5(1)(b)). To obtain ANP data, a researcher is required to enter into a research agreement with an authorized custodian who is authorized to access ANP for research, such as AHS.

If you have any questions, please contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310-0000, then the number to make the call toll free).

Q: **When can an authorized custodian decide NOT to give a patient their own medical information?**
A: The HIA provides certain limited exceptions to disclosure for individual access requests in section 11 of the Act which are applied at the discretion of the authorized custodian as per the professional College's guidance. Alberta Health's HIA Guidelines and Practices Manual provides more detailed explanations of the exceptions to disclosure.

Q: **Can we charge for providing a copy of a report from ANP to the patient?**
A: Custodians may charge fees pursuant to the fee schedule in the Health Information Regulation when responding to formal access requests under Part 2 of the HIA.

Q: **How do I get a copy of audit logs for my office?**
A: Contact the HIA Help Desk at hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca or **780-427-8089** (dial 310-0000, then the number to make the call toll free).