

# Transformations at the Edge

Federated Collaboratives for Health Information Technology, Research & Advocacy

March 15, 2011



Transformations at the Edge (TATE) brings together federated collaboratives in support of the National Health IT Agenda. The collaboratives seek to advance national models for community engagement to achieve the goals for better outcomes in patient care enabled by Health Information Technology. The collaboratives engage thought leaders from industry, academia, government, and local communities in areas of shared interests around Health Information Technology, Research and Advocacy.

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## What is a Free Clinic?

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The National Association of Free Clinics (NAFC) defines free clinics as volunteer-based, safety-net health care organizations that provide a range of medical, dental, pharmacy, and/or behavioral health services to economically disadvantaged individuals who are predominately uninsured. Free clinics are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, or operate as a program component or affiliate of a 501(c)(3) organization. Entities that otherwise meet the above definition, but charge a nominal fee to patients, may still be considered free clinics provided essential services are delivered regardless of the patient's ability to pay. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau, 45 million people are without health insurance in this country. In fact, studies show that the total number of people who may be without health coverage in any given year may exceed 75 million individuals. [Over 4 million patients visited Free Clinics in 2008 and that number doubled to 8 million in 2009.](#) Please click [here](#) for a brief overview of Free Clinics .

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## Health IT in Free Clinics

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Health Information Technology plays an important role in [addressing health disparities](#). There are over 1,400 Free Clinics in the United States. Free Clinics in general do not qualify for [HITECH](#) programs. This creates a considerable gap in our National Health IT Agenda. TATE has recognized the importance of filling this “gap” in order to advance the Health IT Transformations underway in the United States..

**Health IT Transformations in Free Clinics** is a charter project of TATE. The project is supported through volunteer efforts that emulates in many ways, the work of volunteers in Free Clinics today — a community based partnership of industry, healthcare volunteers, academia, and social entrepreneurs. The project will create re-usable models of community engagement that can be transposed and scaled across the country.

[Tom M. Gomez](#) is the Principal Architect of Health IT Transformations in Free Clinics.

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## Goals & Objectives

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### Goals:

**To transform patient care and reduce health disparities through the use of Health Information Technology in Free Clinics.**

### Objectives:

- Achieve [Meaningful Use of Electronic Health Records](#) (EHR) in Free Clinics consistent with the national health IT agenda.
  - Connect Free Clinics to State Level Health Information Exchanges and the [Nationwide Health Information Network](#) (NHIN).
  - Develop and support a [Practice Based Research Network](#) (PBRN) focused on conducting health disparities research and quality improvement studies in Free Clinics.
  - Advance the [Patient Centered Medical Home](#) (PCMH) in Free Clinics.
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## Collaborators and Partners

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- [TATE](#) Volunteers and Affiliates including, but not limited to Free Clinic Associations, Academic Institutions, Health Systems, Physician Groups, Public Health Departments, and Industry Partners.
  - [Open Health Tools](#)
  - [American Academy of Family Physicians National Research Network](#) (AAFP NRN)
  - [Practice Fusion](#)
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## Project Status

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Pilot projects commenced in February 2011 — 3 Free Clinics in Florida and Texas, with current plans to initiate 12-15 pilots in at least 4 states by June 2011. Upon completion of these pilot projects — the program will be scaled across the United States. Current plans include initiatives in Massachusetts, Indiana, Georgia, North Carolina, New Jersey and New York.

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[Get Involved](#)

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## TATE Infrastructure & Resources

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TATE through its network of collaborative and partners is building a Health Information Technology Innovations Laboratory (HITLAB). The HITLAB will provide HIPAA-compliant infrastructure and services to support Health IT Transformations in Free Clinics. The Lab will also provide workbenches for advanced research in the areas of Health Information Exchange (HIE), Data Extraction, Clinical Messaging, Clinical Data Repositories (CDR), Disease Registries, Bio-surveillance, Patient Monitoring, and Patient Communication. Additionally, in order to advance the Translation of Research into Practice ([TRIP](#)), the HITLAB will provide the infrastructure to develop clinical data management applications and collaboration tools that aid in the collection, storage, management and analysis of data from multiple sites to support the clinical, biomedical and translational research activities of Practice Based Research Networks, affiliated academic institutions, and Industry Members of the collaboratives.

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### Project Phase I — Electronic Health Records Implementation

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The initial phase is primarily focused on implementing an EHR solution in the Free Clinic. The implementation process is summarized as follows:

- Create a Project Team comprised of the following personnel
    - Free Clinic Executive Director (Project Owner)
    - Physician Champion (Volunteer Physician)
    - Privacy & Security Officer (Volunteer Staff)
    - Implementation Coordinator (Volunteers assigned by TATE)
    - Project Manager (TATE)
  - Provide 6 hour wiki-based training on the Fundamentals of HIT & EHR Implementation.
  - Set up a Project Management wiki.
  - Identify current grants which require EHR data for supporting grant deliverables.
  - Set up EHR for the Free Clinic (**provided at no-cost** by Partner Solutions Providers).
  - Regular on-site implementation sessions with the Free Clinic Project Team.
  - On-ramp at least 50 percent of Free Clinic Physicians to EHRs within 120 days.
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### Project Phase II — Academic Outreach

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TATE utilizes the framework of the “Academic Outreach Project”, a charter project of [Open Health Tools](#) (OHT). The [Academic Challenge](#) is an initiative of the OHT Academic Outreach Project. TATE serves as the Program Office for the OHT Academic Outreach Project in the United States.

The Academic Challenge plans to focus on use cases centered around Health IT Transformations in Free Clinics. These use cases will support various data management needs for supporting a Free Clinic’s grant deliverables, Health Information Exchange, Practice Based Research in Health Disparities & Quality Improvement studies, and applications for consumer empowerment & patient self-management.

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### Project Phase III — Practice Based Research Network (PBRN)

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TATE in collaboration with the [American Academy of Family Physicians National Research Network](#) (AAFP NRN) is developing a Practice Based Research Network focused on Free Clinics. The AAFP NRN is providing guidance and support to engage Free Clinics in Health Disparities Research and Quality Improvement studies.

TATE is working with the AAFP NRN to connect Free Clinics to a network of EHR enabled primary care practices, the [Distributed Ambulatory Research in Therapeutics Network](#) (DARTNet) using both technology and shared learning to help them transform towards a Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH). DARTNet is a federated network - a collection of databases that reside in multiple member practices and that are linked through a secure Web-based system so they can be searched and queried as one large database while maintaining privacy and confidentiality of patient data.