



## Regional Health Plan Increases Provider Adoption of EFT/ERA

### The Opportunity

Moving the healthcare industry towards fully electronic claims payments and remittance advice can have a significant impact on reducing unnecessary administrative costs for health plans and healthcare providers alike. The system-wide savings opportunity totals almost \$ 2.3 billion for both transactions. Current estimates are that 61 percent of commercial provider payments are now conducted electronically, an increase of more than 11 percent in the past two years alone. Electronic remittance advice has experienced 9 percent growth during this period, and is now at 51 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandated a set of operating rules, effective January 2014, which required health plans to offer an electronic payment option to providers. Despite the encouraging trends towards wider use of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA), adoption remains far from universal, especially as compared to the rate for electronic claims submission (currently at 94 percent).

Recognizing the savings potential from adopting EFT and ERA, a large regional (United States) health plan sought to increase provider participation, while concurrently reducing the administrative burden required to enroll providers. With more than more than 3 million members and a state network of more than 25,000 physicians, the plan is a regional healthcare leader.

As a long-term participant of CAQH ProView<sup>®</sup> and having served on the CAQH CORE Workgroup for EFT and ERA Operating Rules, the plan was already familiar with the quality and effectiveness of CAQH industry-wide initiatives. This experience, coupled with a cost-benefit analysis, led to their selection of EnrollHub<sup>®</sup> for its automated EFT/ERA enrollment process.

*We like the convenience of automating our process and offering providers a one-stop shop for EFT/ERA enrollment.*

— HEALTH PLAN PROJECT LEAD

### The Challenge

The plan required all healthcare providers within their network to participate in EFT/ERA. Prior to the plan's participation in EnrollHub, providers needed to download an enrollment form from their website, print and complete it, then return it by (postal) mail. These handwritten forms were often difficult to read or contained erroneous information, resulting in data entry errors or necessitating outbound calls to provider offices to determine the correct information.

<sup>1</sup>2015 CAQH Index, based on 2014 commercial health plan data.

The plan also experienced significant numbers of inbound calls from providers needing assistance. This cumbersome, manual process required significant staff time, driving up administrative costs and delaying provider enrollment. They decided to fundamentally simplify their EFT/ERA enrollment process to facilitate greater provider adoption.

### Making the Case for EnrollHub

The plan first conducted a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether it was more cost-effective to develop their own automated system or participate in EnrollHub. The results guided the decision by health plan management to choose the latter. Key to influencing the buying decision were the following benefits offered by the solution:

- Increased data quality and reduced errors through automation, in alignment with their provider data quality initiatives.
- Verification that an authorized individual has created each provider account.
- Bank account validation through pre-noting done early in the enrollment process.
- The ability for providers to enroll simultaneously with multiple health plans, which encourages greater provider participation.

### Implementing EnrollHub

To achieve the maximum benefit from EnrollHub, the plan conducted an analysis of their existing enrollment processes to identify those which could be most easily automated. Based on their findings, they decided to implement EnrollHub in two phases:

- **Phase One**—Users login to access the EnrollHub portal to view provider banking information, and then complete the enrollment manually within the BSBST system. This enabled them to quickly begin using the solution without any need for IT resources.
- **Phase Two** - Integrate the plan's system with the EnrollHub API. This required internal IT resources and a longer project timeline, but enabled the plan to further increase efficiency by automating most of its enrollment process.

The first implementation phase immediately reduced many of the health plan manual EFT/ERA enrollment processes, such as mailroom operations needed to handle incoming paper forms. However, while needed provider banking information could now be easily obtain from the EnrollHub portal, staff still entered the data manually into their payment system.

### KEYS FOR SUCCESS

- **Utilize a phased approach** to ease implementation.
- **Modify internal IT systems and processes** to gain the greatest possible efficiencies enabled by EnrollHub.
- **Make it easy for providers** by offering EnrollHub as the single source for EFT/ERA enrollment.
- **Leverage health plan provider outreach and education channels** to spread the message about EFT/ERA enrollment.

While Phase One was being implemented, plan staff identified steps in their internal payment enrollment processes that could be automated. For example, the plan was manually matching the provider information within EnrollHub against their own provider database. In the second phase of implementation and integration with the EnrollHub API, provider EFT/ERA enrollments could automatically move from EnrollHub into the plan's provider inventory system, which then determined whether the provider was a new enrollment or an update to an existing file. With this integration complete, few enrollment situations now require any manual work or decision-making.

### Realizing Operational and Administrative Efficiencies

To encourage network providers to use EnrollHub, the EFT/ERA team partnered with their provider education department to conduct outreach. The messaging highlighted the ease with which providers could use EnrollHub to manage their enrollments with the plan itself—as well as other participating healthcare insurers—through a single process.

Using EnrollHub exclusively has enabled the plan to eliminate provider enrollment confusion and simplified a cumbersome administrative process. With automated operations, their staff are now assigned enrollments via the inventory tracking system, reducing their workload by one to two hours each day per provider.

Since requiring network providers to participate in EFT/ERA and implementing EnrollHub, the plan has experienced a significant increase in enrollments, coupled with reduced administrative costs:

- Enrollments have increased nearly eight-fold, jumping from an average of 67 per month to 491 per month. The plan realized a monthly high of 678 enrollments.
- The plan no longer maintains an EFT/ERA enrollment form on its website. All network providers are now directed to enroll and maintain their payment information in EnrollHub.
- Electronic enrollment data is stored in an inventory tracking system, eliminating the need to file and store paper documents.
- Since all enrollments are electronic, staff need no longer manage incoming enrollment mail. Time and costs associated with conducting inbound and outbound provider calls to correct errors or enter data have been dramatically reduced. As a result, the plan was able to reduce and reallocate staff to other tasks.

*Since using EnrollHub, provider enrollments in EFT increased eight-fold, to almost 500 per month.*

By using EnrollHub exclusively for provider EFT/ERA enrollment and to help automate existing work flows, the plan has made significant progress over the past two years toward reaching its goal of all network providers receiving payments and remittance advice electronically. Plan leaders credit this robust, industry-wide CAQH solution for their increased success.

### About EnrollHub

EnrollHub®, a CAQH Solution®, combines enrollment capabilities for EFT and ERA, enabling healthcare providers to use a single, secure on-line process to enroll with multiple health or dental plans at once. EnrollHub then sends their enrollment information directly to each authorized participating plan. This easy-to-use enrollment tool—available at no charge to healthcare providers—encourages greater provider participation and satisfaction.

Learn more at [www.enrollhub.org](http://www.enrollhub.org).

