The definitive guide to eSignatures for healthcare

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There's no denying new technologies and the pandemic have changed the way we seek out, receive, and administer healthcare.

One of the largest shifts being a move towards lower-risk telehealth, for which private insurance claims increased an astounding 4,347% between March 2019 and March 2020.

But increased healthcare digitization isn't without its challenges; areas like administrative tasks and paperwork are slow to catch up.

Put simply, digital healthcare is full of half-measures that just get the job done but don't do it in the best way for employees or patients.

As Sarjoo Patel, Founder of Beam Healthcare, explains, "During COVID, the use of digital technology to provide clinical care was high, as expected. A lot of the clinicians have accepted telemedicine and other tools to improve care and efficiencies at their clinics or health systems. However, the administrative workflow side of healthcare continues to lag with paper-pushing, redundant forms, and snail-mail."

The problem is, when workflows become a fragmented mix of digital and analog, it adds another layer of admin for your employees as they manually move information between systems—which is both time-consuming and error-prone.

For healthcare providers, this loss of efficiency translates into more time doing administrative tasks and less time helping patients.

But with the help of eSignature technology, healthcare providers can:

- Deliver a better patient experience by limiting the paperwork they need to fill out in person.
- Reduce the amount of paperwork front-line healthcare workers need to manage for each patient so they can see more patients.
- Hire healthcare workers faster with streamlined credentialing processes.
- Limit errors and reduce paperwork-related costs.

So here it is, your guide to improving the patient experience and reducing the administrative load on employees with eSignatures.

Deliver a better patient experience

No healthcare provider wants to keep patients waiting. With already long wait times, patient paperwork adds even more delays to an already trying experience. And when 30% of around 700 surveyed patients report that they've walked out of an appointment due to a long wait, and 20% said they've changed doctors because of wait times, that's a big problem.

But while filling out forms is an unavoidable part of healthcare, you can speed up the time it takes to collect the necessary information and authorization with eSignatures.

By digitizing your document and signing workflows, you can do away with a massive part of the slow, manual paperwork involved in onboarding, discharging, and insurance claims processing.

For instance, instead of having patients fill out onboarding documentation when they arrive, patients or caregivers can read and sign forms digitally over email or on your website before they arrive.

In addition, patients can also sign some forms after they leave. Digital insurance claims, for instance, don't require an in-person or lengthy print, sign, scan, send process and can be completed at a later date.

The faster you can get all the relevant patient forms filled out and signed, the less waiting your patients have to do pre- or post-appointment.

Documents ripe for eSignature adoption

New patient forms
Deliver the seamless, efficient experience your patients expect and deserve by enabling them to fill out new patient and consent forms ahead of time, on their own mobile device or computer.

Claims processing
Increase claims processing efficiency and reduce costs with a fully electronic prior authorization process.

Patient care coordination
Offer patients a seamless experience throughout their entire care journey, by digitizing medical record updates, transition of care documents, consent forms, and discharge forms.

Medical approvals
Make sure every patient's signature for any medical procedure or receipt of any medication is a legally enforceable document.

Integrating digital workflows for these documents means you'll no longer need to print out or scan each document. And you can easily store them electronically for future reference.

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Reduce paperwork for frontline staff

Healthcare workers often find themselves neck-deep in administrative forms—provider agreements, medical director agreements, resident onboarding, physician continuing, medical education exhibits, and more. It's a large reason why doctors only spend an average of 27% of the workday with patients.

"Paperwork takes at least 15 to 20 minutes after every consultation or appointment. It doesn't sound like that much but if you're meeting 100 patients a day and spending 15 minutes on paperwork for every patient, it adds up fast. In fact, that's one of the major causes of burnout," says Sailee Bhambere, Senior Clinical Pathways Manager at Day to Day Health.

And for healthcare facilities, which are often understaffed, this level of paperwork can compromise the quality of care for patients and limit the number of patients they can see.

But it doesn't have to be this way. You can reduce the amount of time-consuming paperwork that burdens staff by digitizing and automating several slow paper processes.

Frontline staff shouldn't be wasting their time with printers and scanners, but the manual print, sign, scan, send process often forces them into a time-consuming runaround just to sign documents.

Simply by making your forms digital, you remove a number of steps from the paperwork process—saving them time that could be better used with patients.

eSignature tools can even automate duplicate data fields across documents, saving your frontline staff even more time. Instead of filling out the same information, like name, address, or date of birth on every single document, once the information is filled out once, it automatically populates on every other form—so frontline staff only need to review the details and then sign.

Onboard healthcare workers faster

Between 2015 and 2019, the typical health facility churned <u>89%</u> of its workforce. And that's only set to get worse as the healthcare workforce lost more than <u>500,000</u> workers in 2020. Couple that with an average of <u>49</u> days to hire a new healthcare employee, and it's no wonder hospitals and clinics are so frequently understaffed.

So what's the cause of such a slow hiring process? When clinics are forced to juggle so many tasks, patients, documents, and communications, the hiring process inevitably slows down.

As Sailee explains, "Rules and regulations could be a bit complicated. So in the US, for instance, every state will have different requirements and different licenses. If you're practicing in one state, your license is not valid in another state."

And slow hiring doesn't just lead to understaffed and overworked teams, hiring, training, filling temporary vacancies is expensive, too—the average replacement cost of full-time registered nurse totals <u>$36,567</u>.

With a few tweaks to the hiring process, healthcare providers can speed up the time it takes to hire new staff - helping deliver better care, reducing stress on employees, and lowering the cost of hiring.

By digitizing and automating many of the duplicate fields in all the hiring forms new workers fill out, you can reduce the amount of time it takes to fill out, distribute, and sign hiring documents.

FLOW

How Flow Healthcare saves Beam Healthcare $600 per employee with Dropbox's eSignature product called Dropbox Sign

For Flow's customer, Beam Healthcare—a supplier of doctors to remote hospitals and online telemedicine services—hiring healthcare professionals was full of paper forms that needed the same information again and again.

As Sarjoo explains, "When Beam hired a provider, they had to fill out an application for the company and run all the appropriate background/reference checks. But then, in order to get this same employee working at 3 or 5 different healthcare facilities, they had to fill out facility-specific new employee applications and go through various checks again. You can imagine the administrative burden on the provider and administrative staff to move all this paperwork forward. This archaic process is a point of frustration in clinicians and at times avoid getting credentialed/privileged at multiple facilities. If we want to improve access to care then healthcare must focus on processes besides just producing more provide."

To make things worse, if a hospital is a big institution with satellite clinics, doctors have to fill out the same paperwork and undergo the same background checks for each of those facilities, too.

That's when Flow turned to Dropbox Sign to reduce the number of duplicate form fields doctors had to complete when working at other hospitals. Flow implemented automated templates using the Dropbox Sign API. "The paper application forms that hospitals need are templated out[...]. So when a hospital asks for them, they're automatically filled out using the HelloSign [now Dropbox Sign] API integration which is connected to our database. The doctor just reads the document and signs off on it. So once they're onboarded, they don't have to manually fill out additional documents," says Sarjoo.

Using the Dropbox Sign API to auto-populate documents and reduce the need for doctors to fill in paperwork multiple times helped Flow's client Beam **reduce the time its staff spent on administrative paperwork by 50% and save an estimated $600 per employee.**

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— Sarjoo Patel, Founder of Beam Healthcare

Reduce errors and back-office admin

Just as important as patient and hiring documents are operational ones. Without them, how can you manage patients or procure medical supplies?

But just because they're important doesn't mean they should take up all of your teams' time—which it often does, with office workers spending around <u>69 days a year</u> on administrative tasks. And it's in large part down to preparing and sending individual documents—and especially prepping the same documents again and again.

However, by digitizing your paper-heavy workflows, you can not only speed up the paperwork process but reduce the chance of errors, reduce costs on storage, and keep a lasting record of documentation. That's precisely what eSignature tools do.

Reduced errors

Most errors occur when information is double or triple handled—that is, a paper document is typed into a machine by another person.

But when the document is digital from the get-go, like with digitized eSignature forms, there's no chance of typing errors slipping into your records.

Save on storage

Printing costs medical facilities a ton. The average 1,500-bed hospital prints more than 8 million pages per month, costing around $3.8 million per year. In addition, storing all this information demands space and costs even more.

But with eSignatures, once the processing is complete, documents are securely stored in the cloud. That means there's no chance of misplacing them, and your staff can retrieve or forward them from anywhere at any time.

Keep important records in good shape

Physical documents degrade over time, making it difficult to produce accurate documents during audits.

But because everything is digital with eSignature tools, whenever you need to pull up a document, it is still in its original signing condition. Plus, it makes it easy to share with patients fast. Instead of waiting for documents to arrive in the post or collecting them in person, you can securely send important documents in an instant.

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Compliance and security

Cyber threats against healthcare providers are persistent and on the rise. Great Plains Health, a hospital that serves 183,000+ patients a month, blocks around 10,000 attempts to access its servers every day.

The threats are real and so are the fines for failing to protect your patients' information—HIPAA violations reach up to $25,000 per violation.

That's why you need to be sure whatever tools you're using to send, collect, and store documents are secure and healthcare compliant.

Dropbox Sign security and HIPAA-compliant forms

Dropbox Sign encrypts every document and stores it in a SOC 1 Type II, SOC 2 Type I, and ISO 27001 certified data center. Access to this data center is strictly controlled by security staff equipped with video surveillance, multi-step authentication, and state-of-the-art intrusion detection systems.

Dropbox Sign also helps achieve sustainable compliance with federal medical loss-ratio regulations, HIPAA, and the ACA (Affordable Care Act).

Its policies, procedures, and infrastructure support customers' need to be HIPAA compliant. There is no certification around HIPAA, so for assurance purposes, we got an assessment completed from an independent third party to ensure compliance to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Security Standard.

How healthcare company VolitionRx securely signs and stores documents with Dropbox Sign and Dropbox integration

With 60 employees, across Europe, Asia, and the Americas, VolitionRx needed to find a way to keep its 20,000-square-foot lab open, liaise with corporate staff working at home, and fulfill regulatory requirements while employees worked from home throughout the pandemic.

Wanting to reduce the burden of paperwork, Daniel Halter, Group IT Manager at VolitionRx, turned to Dropbox Sign to digitize the signature process. "We needed an eSignature solution that was repeatable and scalable, that could be used across different time zones and languages, and which didn't rely on on-premise IT systems that are difficult to maintain, " says Daniel Halter, Group IT Manager at VolitionRx.

And like all businesses in the healthcare industry, VolitionRx takes data security very seriously. Creating and validating nucleosomics-based cancer tests creates masses of protected medical data that must be secured and signed off every time it's used or shared.

Already using Dropbox Business to securely connect remote lab teams and employees, Daniel says integrating Dropbox Sign was a no-brainer. "The less you deviate from a worker's line of sight, the more efficient a tool will be. Using HelloSign [now Dropbox Sign] directly through Dropbox means there's no need to switch between apps, it doesn't impact workflows, and it's much easier to use. The whole process is streamlined and integrated."

VolitionRx employees now use Dropbox Sign to share and sign all medical data release forms, fair practice agreements, as well as internal documents. With signed documents saved automatically in Dropbox, audit trails are easy to follow, and sharing documents with external regulatory bodies is simplified.

And according to Daniel, the Dropbox Sign integration with Dropbox Business means uptake has been high amongst employees, with the need for little to no training.

How eSignature APIs takes digitized healthcare to the next level

You've heard how eSignatures are helping healthcare providers deliver better patient experiences, reduce employee admin, and lower costs. But it's just the tip of the iceberg. By integrating eSignatures into your digital workflows, via API, you can refine and control signing even more to deliver improved experiences for patients and employees.

No person wants to spend more time signing paper documents. You want to make signing as simple as possible for patients and doctors so they can spend more on treatment. And that's exactly what eSignature APIs can deliver. By embedding eSignatures directly into your website or app, patients and staff can securely sign in one single workflow—no need to print or use clunky tools.

What's more, eSignature APIs are helping healthcare providers maintain the trusted relationships they've built. Patients want to know their sensitive personal information is going to the healthcare provider they trust. That is, patients want to know they're interacting directly with you. eSignature APIs help build trust too. How? Because they're completely customizable, which means you can make every document and signing workflow complexly custom-branded with your exact logo, color, font, and more. That way patients are always interacting with the brand they know and trust.

Check out the Dropbox Sign API's industry-leading setup. With user-friendly documentation, a library of SDKs, and a technical support team behind you, integrating the Dropbox Sign eSignature API only takes an average of **2.5 days**.

Digitized healthcare is here. Are you ready?

The events of COVID have placed digitization front of mind for the medical world.

And this digitization isn't just good for patients, it's an opportunity for healthcare facilities to deliver a better experience for healthcare workers, and administrative staff by limiting the risk, burden, and repetition of paperwork.

But to deliver on that promise, healthcare facilities need secure, compliant tools they can rely on. And that's just what eSignatures deliver.

If you're ready to start using eSignatures in your healthcare facility, book a demo with our expert API team.

About Dropbox Sign

Dropbox Sign, a Dropbox company, simplifies work for millions of individuals. Companies all over the world rely on our eSignature solutions to power their applications, making it easier to close deals faster, onboard new hires, complete documents without error, and much more. For more information, visit the Dropbox Sign website.