

Social Information Exchange Network (SIEN) & Unite Us — Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Social Information Exchange Network (SIEN)?

The SIEN is a regional, cross-sector care coordination system designed to connect providers across health, human services, behavioral health, education, and workforce systems. It allows organizations to work together through shared referrals, real-time communication, and outcomes tracking. The goal of the SIEN is to build a coordinated and equitable ecosystem where individuals can access the right supports at the right time — without falling through the cracks created by siloed systems.

2. What is Unite Us?

Unite Us is the secure technology platform that powers the SIEN. Through Unite Us, partners can send and receive electronic, closed-loop referrals, track whether an individual receives a service, communicate across agencies in real time, and identify trends, gaps, and community-level needs through data.

3. What are the next steps for the SIEN after this webinar?

This webinar represents the first step in a longer, collaborative planning process. Upcoming steps include collecting survey feedback, mapping services and gaps, creating a cross-sector planning group, holding sector-specific engagement sessions, developing shared workflows and data practices, and working with county leadership and funders to create a sustainable governance and funding model.

4. How will community organizations be engaged going forward?

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are central to the SIEN's success. Engagement will include listening sessions, focus groups, co-design of workflows, onboarding and training support, and continuous opportunities to provide input. This is a partner-driven initiative, not a top-down rollout.

5. Why is this webinar only the first step?

A Social Information Exchange is not a single tool — it is a system transformation that requires planning, collaboration, and community input. This session introduced the vision, shared regional examples, and began identifying partners who want to help shape the next steps.

6. How does the SIEN differ from 211 / Help Network of Northeast Ohio?

211/Help Network is a phone-based information and referral hotline for residents. It provides live assistance, crisis support, and connections to services — **an incredibly valuable and needed community resource**, especially for individuals without internet access or those needing immediate human support. The difference is that the SIEN/Unite Us system is a secure, closed-loop referral platform used by providers to coordinate care

between agencies. It is also a regional data platform that tracks referrals, service outcomes, unmet needs, and system trends, helping partners identify gaps and improve equity. Together, they complement rather than replace one another.

In short:

211 helps individuals find services.

The SIEN helps agencies coordinate care and uses data to strengthen the entire ecosystem.

211/Help Network connects people to agencies — SIEN connects agencies to each other

7. Does the SIEN duplicate existing services?

No. The SIEN does not create new programs; it connects and strengthens existing services. It reduces fragmentation, repeated intakes, gaps between providers, referral confusion, and lost follow-up.

8. Is Unite Up free? Who pays for it?

Unite Us is free for all nonprofit non-clinical community-based organizations (CBOs). Clinical and healthcare entities may have associated costs, but the regional SIEN funding effort aims to build a shared fundraising approach to remove barriers for all partners.

9. How is the SIEN evidence-based?

Research shows that closed-loop referrals improve access and outcomes, cross-sector coordination reduces duplication and inequity, shared data systems strengthen community planning, and whole-person approaches support both health and workforce stability. Similar systems across Ohio and the U.S. have shown strong outcomes.

10. How does the SIEN support the workforce system?

The SIEN helps address the social determinants of work — transportation, childcare, mental health, housing, and more. It connects jobseekers to supports more quickly, improves coordination between workforce, behavioral health, and social service providers, and reduces administrative burden. It also strengthens employer retention efforts.

11. Will this create extra work for organizations?

Most partners ultimately experience less work and less duplication because the system replaces manual referral processes, reduces repeated intakes, and streamlines communication across agencies. Onboarding and training are provided with ongoing support.

12. How is client privacy protected?

Unite Us is fully compliant with HIPAA, FERPA, 42 CFR Part 2, and state privacy requirements. Data is encrypted, access is controlled, and clients choose what information is shared and with whom.

13. How can my organization join the Unite Us Network?

Complete the webinar survey to receive the link, or request access directly. Once your organization joins, you will receive onboarding, training, and ongoing support from the regional Unite Us team.