

## How to Upload HCAI Patient-Level Administrative Data (SIERA) into the Hospital Quality Improvement Platform

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This document provides instructions for hospitals participating in the Hospital Quality Improvement Platform (HQIP) to help them locate and securely upload the Patient-Level Administrative Data that they already submit to the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) so they can explore recent (same year) performance in the HQIP system 8 to 20 months before HCAI releases their statewide Limited Data Sets.

### Background

Per [California statute](#), your hospital *already* submits [Patient-Level Administrative Data](#) to HCAI during the year [biannually](#) for inpatient, and [quarterly](#) for emergency department and ambulatory surgery encounters via the [SIERA Portal](#). HCAI compiles these “SIERA” data across all hospitals each calendar year and releases statewide Model Limited Data Sets (formerly AB 2876 data sets) of all inpatient (PDD), emergency department (ED), and ambulatory surgery (AS) encounters, which are generally available around August of the *next* calendar year. Data dictionaries, file layouts, data request instructions, and [other documentation for these Model Limited Data Sets are available on HCAI's Limited Data Request Information page](#).

### Locating the Data Files

1. Identify the person or group who submits the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data for your hospital to HCAI. This is typically an employee at the hospital or system level, but may be a vendor acting as a designated agent. Because hospitals are required to submit [many different types of data](#) to HCAI (e.g., facility utilization and financial data are also reported), it is important to specifically identify the person or group that submits the [“Patient-Level Administrative Data \(SIERA\)”](#) to HCAI. Frequently this group or person works in one of the following areas of the hospital: Health Information Management (HIM), Information Technology (IT), Clinical/Health Informatics, Quality Improvement (QI), and Finance/Billing.
2. The person or group who submits your hospital’s SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data generates a *minimum* of 10 files per calendar year. The following table shows the SIERA reporting schedule to indicate how many files can be identified and uploaded into the HQI platform. The first time your hospital uploads data, the simplest way to communicate which SIERA files you need uploaded is to tell them:
  - **If the current month is January-July:** “We need to upload all SIERA inpatient, emergency department, and ambulatory surgery Patient-Level Administrative Data created since

January of *last* year now and then all new files from now on when they are submitted to HCAI.”

- **If the Current Month is August-December:** “We need to upload all SIERA inpatient, emergency department, and ambulatory surgery Patient-Level Administrative Data created since January of *this* year now and then all new files from now on when they are submitted to HCAI.”

SIERA File Type	HCAI	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug <sup>†</sup>	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inpatient (IP)	Data period	Jan 1–Jun 30						Jul 1–Dec 31					
	Due date	Sep 30 of the <i>same</i> year						Mar 31 of the <i>next</i> year					
Emergency Department (ED)	Data period	Jan 1–Mar 31		Apr 1–Jun 30			Jul 1–Sep 30			Oct 1–Dec 31			
	Due date	May 15 of the <i>same</i> year		Aug 14 of the <i>same</i> year			Nov 14 of the <i>same</i> year			Feb 14 of the <i>next</i> year			
Ambulatory Surgery (AS)	Data period	Jan 1–Mar 31		Apr 1–Jun 30			Jul 1–Sep 30			Oct 1–Dec 31			
	Due date	May 15 of the <i>same</i> year		Aug 14 of the <i>same</i> year			Nov 14 of the <i>same</i> year			Feb 14 of the <i>next</i> year			

<sup>†</sup>HCAI compiles SIERA data across all hospitals and releases statewide Limited Data Sets around August of the *next* calendar year.

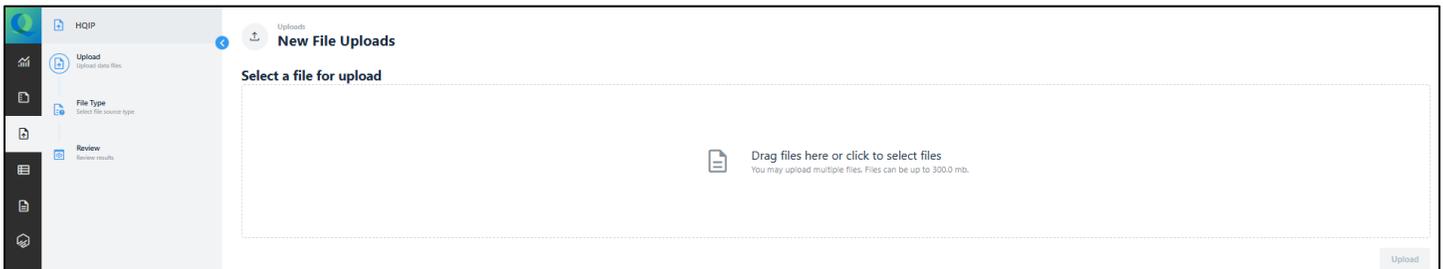
- If this person or group asks you what “format” the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data need to be in, tell them: “The files should follow the same format and file specifications used for online SIERA transmission per the HCAI specifications for [IP Data](#) or [ED/AS Data](#) required at the time.”
- If this person or group asks you what “file type” the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data need to be in, tell them that: “Per the HCAI specifications for [IP Data](#) or [ED/AS Data](#), the files should be fixed ASCII text files with a “.txt” extension (or if zipped, a “.zip” extension). Only files with those extensions can be uploaded.”
- **Naming Convention:** If possible, request that the files follow the specific naming convention of: “**HCAI#\_FileType\_Year\_Quarter**” (e.g., **106ABCDEF\_ED\_2025\_Q3.txt** for an emergency department file covering the first quarter of 2025 or **106ABCDEF\_IP\_2025\_Q1\_Q2.txt** for an inpatient file covering the first two quarters of 2025).

## Uploading Instructions

Your SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data can be uploaded directly into the [HQIP system](#), which encrypts the files during the upload. The person who will upload the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data into the HQI platform must have an HQIP account. If you need an account to be created for yourself, the uploader, or anyone else, email us at [HQAnalytics@HQInstitute.org](mailto:HQAnalytics@HQInstitute.org) with their name, hospital, and email address, and we will make their account the same day. They will receive an invitation email requesting them to log into the [HQIP system](#). For uploaders who handle multiple

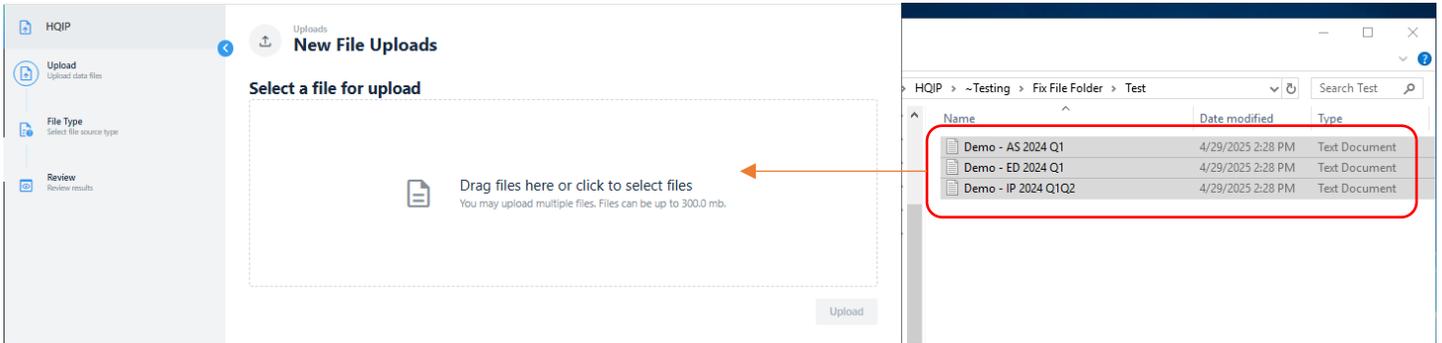
[hospitals](#), [HQIP SFTP is also an option](#). If you have any questions, email us at [HQIAnalytics@HQInstitute.org](mailto:HQIAnalytics@HQInstitute.org).

Log in to the [HQIP system](#) from a computer with access to the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data files to be uploaded. Once you are logged in, click on the upload arrow icon on the left-hand panel to get to the [Data Upload page](#). You can Drag & Drop the SIERA Patient-Level Administrative Data files to the Drag & Drop box or Click the box to Browse for the files. **You can upload multiple files of the same type (i.e., IP, ED, AS) at the same time.** HQI can accept two type so files (.txt and .csv/.xlsx). Please see below for the specifications for each type.

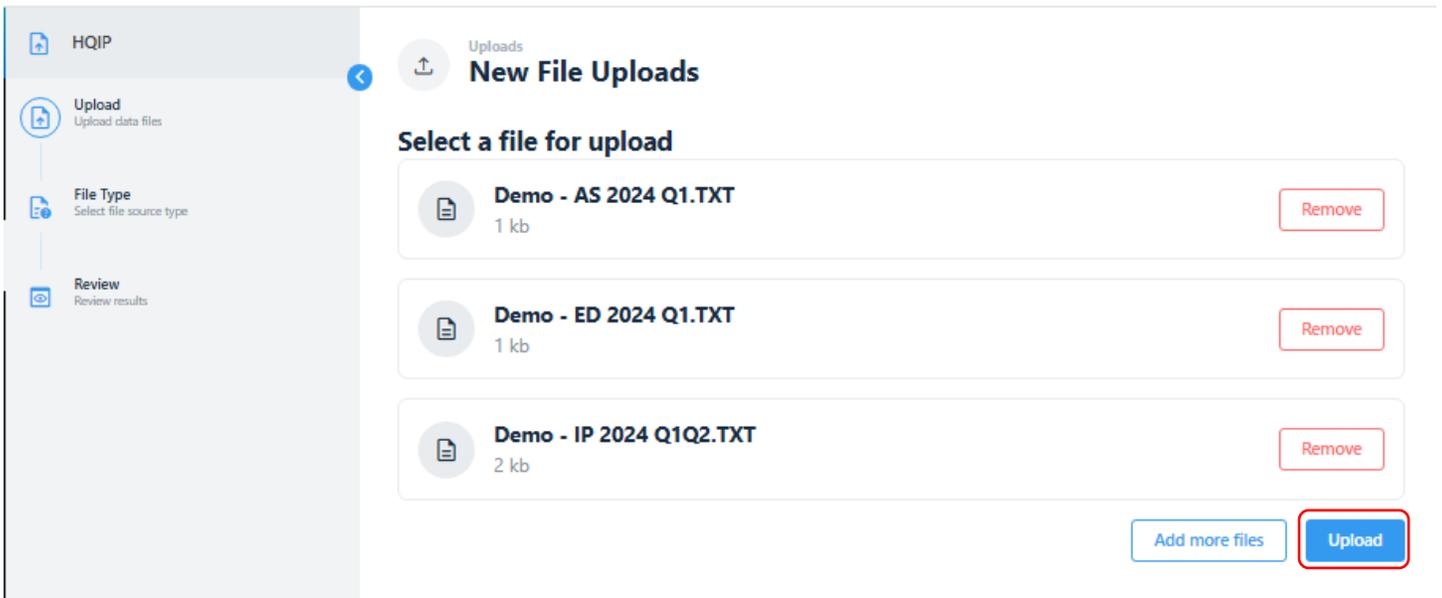


## Uploading .txt Files

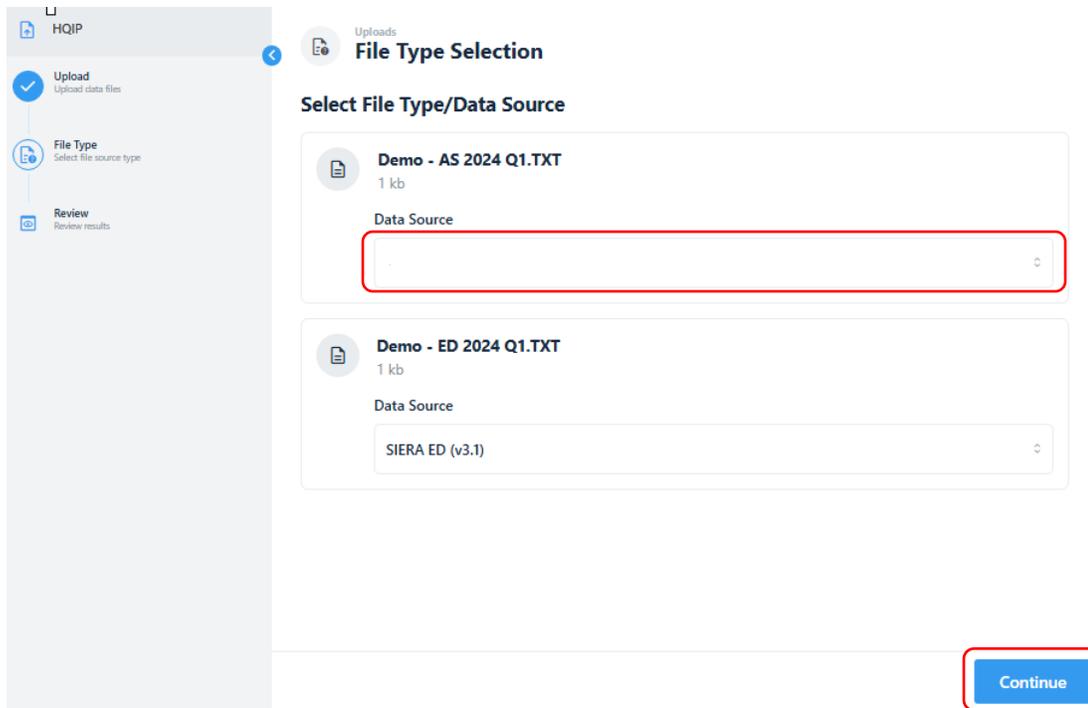
For **.txt** files, HQI follows the same file specifications from HCAI. You can find the file specifications here for [Inpatient](#) and [Outpatient](#). The naming convention of the files for .txt does not matter.



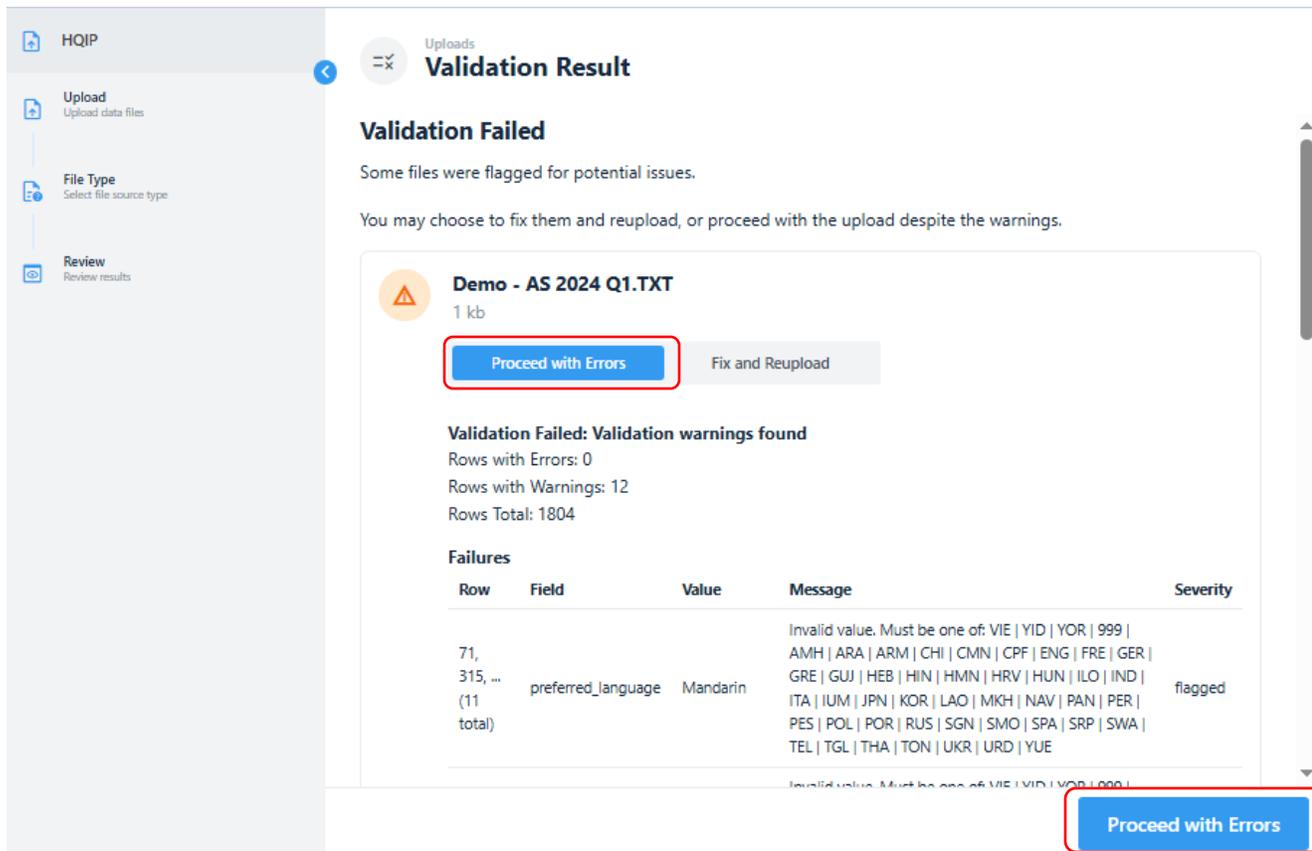
After the file loads, click upload.



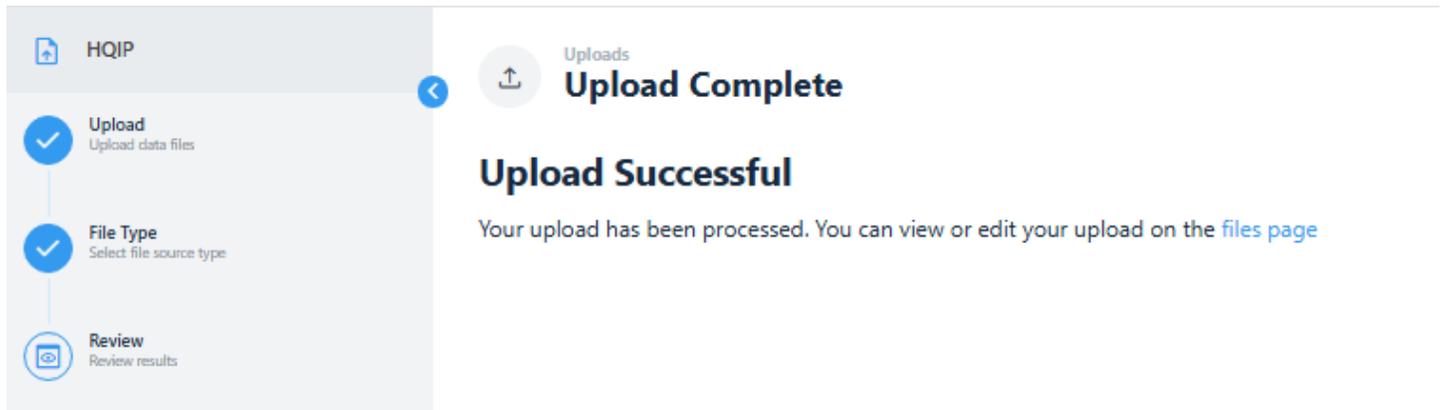
The data sources should auto-populate; if not, click the drop-down bar and select the correct file types and click continue.



If your file hits a validation failed page, you can “Proceed with Errors” or “Fix and Reupload”. Please be sure to click one of the options and click the blue button below.



Once completed, you'll see an Upload Successful page.



## Uploading .csv or .xlsx Files

For **.csv** or **.xlsx** files, HQI leverages the SIERA down files from HCAI's SIERA portal. HQI is aware that hospitals may make edits in the SIERA portal. If you download these files from the SIERA portal, please be aware it strips out SSNs. You can edit the document to include the SSNs if you'd like to utilize HQI's readmission reports. For these files, the naming convention does matter since there is no HCAI ID located within the file, we rely on the file name to extract that information. If no HCAI ID is present in the file name, you will be redirected to a secondary page that requests you to pick your hospital name.

The process is the same for drag and drop, wait for the file to load, select the proper data source, and click continue. It should take you to the Upload Successful page.

