

## **What is a Virtual Private Network (VPN)?**

VPN is a technology that enables an organization to provide a secure connection to its network resources (web sites, databases, hard drives, etc) over the insecure Internet. The secure connection can be either to an individual or to another organization. The VPN connection for individual use is called a remote access VPN. When organizations establish a VPN with another organization to allow data to pass securely, it is called a Lan-to-Lan or Site-to-Site VPN. The type of VPN is beyond the scope of this guide, only the individual remote access VPN will be covered here.

The State of New Hampshire DOIT provides 3 types of remote access VPN for individuals. The most flexible VPN access method is provided using the Cisco AnyConnect Secure Mobility Client (AnyConnect). A user connecting to the state network using AnyConnect has the same access as any user physically at their state office. They have a state network IP address and use state network services such as Dynamic Name Resolution (DNS) and internet access through WebSense. Most state employees who use a VPN connection use the AnyConnect Client.

There is also a Clientless VPN connection. Clientless VPN access is provided using a web browser (Internet Explorer (IE) is the only officially supported browser by State of NH DOIT) to connect to a designated VPN external website. It is most often used, and is the preferred method for use, by vendors or contractors. Some state employees also use it in unique circumstances. A VPN user connects to the state network with IE through a web address (URL) provided by DOIT when a person receives their account. The clientless VPN connection is established when the person successfully enters their username and password to log in. At this point, the VPN security device establishes a session and acts as a proxy device for the VPN computer. Unlike the client VPN, the clientless VPN user is not on the state network and does not have a state-issued IP address. The VPN security device hosts all connections for the clientless VPN user allowing access to the inside network. It is commonly referred to as a "smart tunnel" since it allows PCs to run applications over the tunnel to state resources (databases, remote desktop, programming, etc) even though the PC is not physically on the state network.

A VPN Portal is the third type of remote access provided. It uses a web browser just like the clientless VPN but is restricted to only allow access to websites and web applications. Typically it is used to access websites that are not open to the public and require someone to be part of the state network. The web portal VPN allows users to connect to the website to access the services and is generally used by outside vendors and contractors.