

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ("DSS")

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Effective Date of this Notice: April 14, 2003

Q. Does DSS share my medical information with others?

A. DSS may share your medical information with others before we pay providers for your treatment and services; to see if you are eligible for other services from DSS; and to run the Medicaid, HUSKY or other DSS programs. This includes looking into possible fraud or overpayments and defending the agency in lawsuits. For example, we may share your medical information with the following:

- professionals we hire to see if your treatment is necessary and if we can pay for it;
- companies we hire to pay medical bills and to find out if you are eligible for any health benefit programs;
- providers or agencies, if necessary to help you get benefits from DSS;
- others to make sure you are getting the most appropriate benefits; and
- health insurance companies we bill if DSS has paid for services that those companies should have paid for.

We may contact you about your appointments, treatment alternatives or health-related benefits and services.

We may also share your health information, without your approval, in an emergency, in response to a court order or when the law requires that we share it. For example, the law may require that we share your information with:

- the Labor Commissioner if it is directly related to unemployment compensation or to serve certain people receiving assistance from DSS;
- the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services when necessary to administer some of its programs;
- the Commissioner of Administrative Services or Public Safety to collect overpayments or amounts owed to DSS; to investigate fraud; and to locate absent parents of children who are on benefits;
- the Commissioner of Children and Families if there is immediate danger to a child's health or safety or the Department of Public Health to coordinate certain benefits;
- other state agencies, the police, or the federal government.

Q. Does DSS need my approval before it shares my medical information?

A. When you applied for benefits from DSS, you agreed that DSS could share your information for purposes of running its programs and paying for your benefits. We need your separate approval to share information about you that is not related to payment of claims, treatment, or running the benefit programs that you are on, except if the law requires us to share it. Even if you give your approval, you may change your mind as long as you do so before we have actually shared the information.

Q. What are DSS's duties?

A. DSS must:

- keep your medical information private and tell you our legal duties and practices relating to privacy, as required by law;
- follow all of the rules listed in this notice;
- send or give you a new notice if we make important changes to our privacy rules and practices. DSS reserves the right to change its privacy practices. If the privacy practices change, the new notice with the new privacy practices will apply to the information DSS already has about you.

Q. What are my rights?

A. You have the right to:

- have a paper copy of this notice;
- ask us to limit the way we share your information, although we are not required to agree to what you ask;
- an accounting. Starting from April 14, 2003 and going forward, DSS will keep a list of persons or agencies we give your health information to if you did not ask us to share it or if we shared it for reasons other than payment, treatment or to run DSS programs. You may get that list for 6 years back from the date of your request, except that the list was not kept before April 14, 2003.
- ask us to contact you in a special way. For example, you may ask us to contact you at work or by mail only;
- look at and copy the health information we have about you, except if we think it would be harmful to you; there is a criminal investigation pending; or you would learn the names of people who gave us information about you without your knowing it and we agreed not to share those names with you;
- ask us to change information we have about you in your DSS record. You must ask us in writing and state the reason you are asking for the change. We may not agree to change the information in your record.

Q. What if I have questions?

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- If you have questions, need this notice provided in an alternative format, or if you wish to exercise your rights as stated above, you may call the DSS Privacy Officer at Central Office at 1-888-760-8883 or your eligibility caseworker. For TTY, call 1-888-760-8883.

Q. What if I think DSS shared my information incorrectly?

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- You may complain by writing to the state DSS Privacy Officer at 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106. You may also complain to the federal Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave., SW, HHH Building, Room 509H, Washington, DC 20201, within 180 days of when the problem happened.

Your benefits will not be affected if you make a complaint.