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County Executive

COUNTY OF ONONDAGA



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Chief Fiscal Officer

MARK STASKO
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DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

DIVISION OF RISK MANAGEMENT
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Privacy Laws – How They Affect Your Employee Benefits

Effective April 14, 2003, privacy regulations regarding health conditions and medical claims have become stricter. The Employee Benefits Division will not be able to release **Protected Health Information** about you or your dependents to anyone, without a signed authorization from the member. This includes information you request regarding your spouse and your covered dependents who have reached the age of 18. Protected Health Information (PHI) is any information that can identify you as an individual and your past, present or future physical or mental health condition.

The law requires us to make sure that any PHI that identifies you or your dependent is kept private. If you or your dependent (age 18 or older) who is covered under your contract wish to designate another individual to receive information relating to health insurance and your protected health information, you or your dependent must complete an authorization form and return it to the Employee Benefits Division, 15th Floor Civic Center, or you can obtain a copy of the authorization form by calling the Employee Benefits Division at 435-3498 and request one. You may complete an authorization form at any time. Remember, due to the provisions of this law, the Employee Benefits Division will not be able to divulge any PHI regarding you or your dependents to anyone without an authorization on file. The privacy laws prohibit the Employee Benefits Division from giving out any information regarding your dependents to anyone that you have designated without an authorization form. Your spouse and children (over the age of 18) must complete a form authorizing us to release PHI to you. If you currently handle insurance matters for your elderly parents, you will still be able to call and receive information regarding your parent as long as there is an authorization form from your parent to release PHI to you.

Privacy laws prohibit us from releasing information to anyone, unless there is a signed consent on file from the individual. We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal and we are committed to safeguarding this information. Our policy has always been to keep all information about you confidential in all settings. At the time of hire, employees of the Risk Management Division sign an agreement to keep information obtained through the course of daily work confidential, and employees understand the sanctions in place for violating our privacy practices. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact us at 435-3498. We will be happy to answer any questions you might have regarding this issue.