

**MUNICIPALITIES COLLEGES SCHOOLS INSURANCE GROUP  
MCSIG SELF-INSURED PLAN**

**NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

***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 Notice:** July 16, 2013

**GENERAL PRIVACY RULES**

The Municipalities Colleges Schools Insurance Group (“MCSIG”), as the sponsor of the MCSIG Self-Insured Plan (the “Plan”) is required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information and to inform you with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your protected health information, including:

- The Plan’s uses and disclosures of protected health information;
- Your privacy rights with respect to such information;
- The Plan’s duties with respect to such information;
- The person or office to contact for further information about the Plan’s privacy practices.

**Section 1. Notice of Uses and Disclosures**

(a) Required Uses and Disclosures. Upon your request, the Plan is required to give you access to certain protected health information, which includes all individually identifiable health information in order to inspect and copy it. Use and disclosure of your protected health information may be required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine the Plan’s compliance with the privacy regulations.

(b) Uses and disclosures to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations without your consent or authorization. The Plan and its business associates will use protected health information without your consent, authorization or opportunity to agree or object to carry out “treatment, payment and health care operations” as defined below.

(i) *Treatment* is the provision, coordination or management of health care and related services. For example, your pharmacy may contact your treating physician to refill your prescription for medication.

(ii) *Payment* includes but is not limited to actions to make coverage determinations and to provide payment for the treatment you receive. For example, we may use and disclose your protected health information to pay and manage your claims, coordinate your benefits and review health care services provided to you.

(iii) *Health care operations* include but are not limited to quality assessment and improvement, reviewing competence or qualifications of health care professionals, underwriting, premium rating and other insurance activities relating to creating or renewing insurance contracts and related business services. For example, the Plan may use information about your claims to refer you to a disease management program, project future benefit costs and audit the accuracy of its claims processing functions.

(c) Other uses and disclosures for which consent, authorization or opportunity to object is not required. Use and disclosure of your protected health information is allowed without your consent, authorization or request under the following circumstances:

(i) When required by law. The Plan may use and disclose your protected health information when required by law, and when the use or disclosure complies with and is limited to the relevant requirement of such law.

(ii) When permitted for purposes of public health activities.

(iii) Reports about victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to government entities. The Plan will disclose your protected health information in these reports only if the Plan is required or authorized to do so by law, or if you otherwise agree.

(iv) To a public health oversight agencies. The Plan will provide protected health information as requested to government agencies that have the authority to audit our operations.

(v) When required for judicial or administrative proceedings, provided certain conditions are met. Those conditions include that satisfactory assurances are given to the Plan that the requesting party has made a good faith attempt to provide written notice to you, the notice provided sufficient information about the proceeding to permit you to raise an objection and no objections were raised or were resolved in favor of disclosure by the court or tribunal.

(vi) When required for law enforcement purposes. The Plan may release protected health information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official in the following circumstances: (1) to respond to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process; (2) to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, (3) to assist the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, the Plan is unable to obtain the person's agreement, (4) to investigate a death the Plan believes may be due to criminal conduct, (5) to investigate criminal conduct, and (6) to report a crime, its location or victims or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime (in emergency circumstances).

(vii) When required to be given to a coroner or medical examiner for the purpose of identifying a deceased person, determining a cause of death or other duties as authorized by law. Also, disclosure is permitted to funeral directors, consistent with applicable law, as necessary to carry out their duties with respect to the decedent.

(viii) Organ procurement. The Plan may disclose protected health information to facilitate organ donation and transplantation.

(ix) Medical research. The Plan may disclose protected health information for

medical research projects, subject to strict legal restrictions.

(x) When consistent with applicable law and standards of ethical conduct if the Plan, in good faith, believes the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public.

(xi) Special government functions. The Plan may disclose protected health information to various departments of the government such as the U.S. military or U.S. Department of State.

(xii) When authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with workers' compensation or other similar programs established by law.

(d) Uses and disclosures that require that you be given an opportunity to agree or disagree prior to the use or disclosure. Disclosure of your protected health information to family members, other relatives and your close personal friends is allowed if the information is directly relevant to the family or friend's involvement with your care or payment for that care and you have either agreed to the disclosure or have been given an opportunity to object and have not objected.

(e) Uses and disclosures that require your written authorization or consent.

(i) In general, the Plan will obtain a written authorization before using or disclosing your protected health information whenever it is required to do so under the privacy rules. For example, we will not supply confidential information to another company for its marketing purposes (unless it is for Health Care Operations), for sale (unless under strict legal restrictions), or to a potential employer with whom you are seeking employment without your signed authorization. Your written authorization generally will be obtained before the Plan will use or disclose psychotherapy notes about you from your psychotherapist. The Plan may use and disclose psychotherapy notes when needed by the Plan to defend against litigation filed by you. The Plan will not disclose to third parties the results of genetic testing in a manner which includes individually identifying characteristics without your written authorization.

(ii) The Plan may require your consent to disclose protected health information, even to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations, to certain individuals or organizations. For example, if your union representative is helping you with a claim the Plan may require you to sign a consent form before it will disclose protected health information to that person.

(iii) You may revoke an authorization that you previously have given by sending a written request to our Privacy Officer, but not with respect to any actions the Plan has already taken.

## **Section 2. Rights of Individuals**

(a) Right to Request Restrictions on Protected Health Information Uses and Disclosures. You may request the Plan to restrict uses and disclosures of your protected health information to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations, or to restrict uses and disclosures to family members, relatives, friends or other persons identified by you who are involved in your care or payment for your care. While the Plan will consider all requests for restrictions carefully, the Plan is not required to agree to your request. However, the Plan must comply with your request to restrict disclosure of your protected health information for payment or health care operations purposes if you

paid for these services in full, out of pocket.

Such requests should be made to the individual identified in Section 5.

(b) Right to Receive Confidential Communications of PHI. The Plan will accommodate reasonable requests to receive communications of protected health information by alternative means or at alternative locations. The Plan must agree to your request if you state that disclosure of the information will put you in danger. You or your personal representative will be required to complete a form to request restrictions on uses and disclosures of your protected health information. Such request should be made to the individual identified in Section 5.

(c) Right to Inspect and Copy Protected Health Information. Except under certain circumstances limited by law, you have a right to inspect and obtain a copy of your protected health information for as long as the Plan maintains the protected health information. The requested information will be provided within 30 days if the information is maintained on site or within 60 days if the information is maintained offsite. A single 30-day extension is allowed if the Plan is unable to comply with the deadline. If the information you request is in an electronic health record, you may request that these records be transmitted electronically to yourself or a designated individual. If you request copies of your protected health information, the Plan may charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost.

You or your personal representative will be required to complete a form to request access to the protected health information. Requests for access to protected health information should be made to the individual identified in Section 5. If access is denied, you and your personal representative will be provided with a written denial setting forth the basis for the denial, a description of how you may exercise rights to review and a description of how you may complain to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

(d) Right to Amend Protected Health Information. You have the right to request that the individual identified in Section 5 amend your protected health information or a record about you for as long as the protected health information is maintained by the Plan. You or your personal representative will be required to complete a form to request amendment of the protected health information. The Plan may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that: (i) was not created by the Plan, unless the person who created the information is no longer available to make the amendment, (ii) is not part of the protected health information we keep about you, (iii) is not part of the protected health information that you would be allowed to see or copy, or, (iv) is determined by the Plan to be accurate and complete.

The Plan has 60 days after the request is made to act on the request. A single 30-day extension is allowed if the Plan is unable to comply with the deadline. If the request is denied in whole or part, the Plan must provide you with a written denial that explains the basis for the denial. You or your personal representative may then submit a written statement disagreeing with the denial and have that statement included with any future disclosures of your protected health information.

(e) The Right to Receive an Accounting of Protected Health Information Disclosures. You have the right to request a list of protected health information disclosures, which is also referred to as an accounting.

The list will not include disclosures the Plan has made as authorized by law. For example,

the accounting will not include disclosures made for treatment, payment, and health care operation purposes (except as noted in the last paragraph of this subsection (d)). Also, no accounting will be made for disclosures made directly to you or under an authorization that you provided or those made to your family or friends. The list will not include disclosures the Plan has made for national security purposes or law enforcement personnel or disclosures made before April 14, 2003.

The list provided by the Plan will include disclosures made within the last six years (subject to the April 14, 2003 beginning date) unless you specify a shorter period. The first list you request within a 12 month period will be free. You may be charged a reasonable fee for providing any additional lists within a 12-month period.

You may also request and receive an accounting of disclosures made for payment, treatment, or health care operations during the prior three years for disclosures made as of January 1, 2014 for electronic health records acquired before January 1, 2009, or January 1, 2011 for electronic health records acquired on or after January 1, 2009.

(f) Personal Representatives. You may exercise your rights through a personal representative. Your personal representative will be required to produce evidence of his/her authority to act on your behalf before that person will be given access to your protected health information or allowed to take any action for you. The Plan retains discretion to deny access to your protected health information to a personal representative to provide protection to those vulnerable people who depend on others to exercise their rights under these rules and who may be subject to abuse or neglect. This also applies to personal representatives of minors.

(g) Right to Request a Paper Copy. If you agree to receive this Privacy Notice electronically, you have the right to obtain a paper copy of this Privacy Notice upon request from the individual identified in Section 5.

### **Section 3. The Plan's Duties**

(a) General Duty. The Plan is required to comply with the terms of this notice. However, the Plan reserves the right to change its privacy practices and to apply the changes to any protected health information received or maintained by the Plan prior to that date. If a privacy practice is changed, a revised version of this notice will be provided to all past and present participants and beneficiaries for whom the Plan still maintains protected health information. The revised notice will be mailed to all active and retired plan participants. Any revised version of this notice will be distributed within 60 days of the effective date of any material change to the uses or disclosures, the individual's rights, the duties of the Plan or other privacy practices stated in this notice.

(b) Minimum Necessary Standard. When using or disclosing protected health information or when requesting protected health information from another covered entity, the Plan will make reasonable efforts not to use, disclose or request more than the Limited Data Set, or if necessary, the minimum necessary information necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of the use, disclosure or request, taking into consideration practical and technological limitations.

However, the minimum necessary standard will not apply in the following situations:

(i) Disclosures to or requests by a health care provider for treatment;

- (ii) Uses or disclosures made to the participant or beneficiary;
- (iii) Disclosures made to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- (iv) Uses or disclosures that are required by law; and
- (v) Uses or disclosures that are required for the Plan's compliance with legal regulations.

(c) De-Identified Information. This notice does not apply to information that has been de-identified. De-identified information is information that does not identify an individual and with respect to which there is no reasonable basis to believe that the information can be used to identify the individual.

In addition, the Plan may use or disclose "summary health information" for obtaining premium bids or modifying, amending or terminating the group health plan, which summarizes the claims history, claims expenses or type of claims experienced by individuals for whom a plan sponsor has provided health benefits under a group health plan; and from which identifying information has been deleted in accordance with HIPAA.

#### **Section 4. Your Right to File A Complaint With the Plan or the HHS Secretary**

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Privacy Officer named in Section 5 below, or with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with the Plan, put your complaint in writing and address it to the Privacy Officer named in Section 5 below. The Plan will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint. You may also contact the Privacy Officer if you have questions or comments about our privacy practices.

#### **Section 5. Whom to Contact at the Plan for More Information**

If you have any questions regarding this notice or the subjects addressed in it, you may contact:

Roxanne Buckner  
76 Stephanie Drive  
Salinas, CA 93901  
(831) 755-0161 (Phone)  
(831) 755-0172 (Fax)