
FEHB Program Carrier Letter

All Carriers

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Insurance Services Program

Letter No. 2003-28

Date: September 5, 2003

Fee-for-service [27] Experience-rated HMO [27] Community-rated HMO [26]

SUBJECT: Avoiding Potential Misuse of Social Security Numbers in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program

The Social Security Number (SSN) can serve as a critical link in identity theft cases, identity creation, and other crimes. In order to reduce these crimes the Social Security Administration is restricting the approved uses of the SSN. New restrictions preclude the use of SSN on drivers' licenses and other routine disclosures. OPM is joining the SSA in limiting the use and display of the SSN.

More than 20 years ago, OPM directed the use of the SSN for identification of enrollees in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. We will continue this practice. We will also continue the OPM policy to allow an individual who objects to the use of his or her SSN as an identifier to decline to provide it. Under those circumstances, the health insurance carrier and the agency will reach agreement with the individual on a unique number for identification purposes.

If you show your members' SSNs on their identification cards please discontinue this practice. As soon as it is operationally and financially practical you should replace membership cards with new ones that do not display the SSN.

The Privacy Act requires OPM to publish a routine-use notice in the Federal Register. The notice and our contract with you limits the use of personal information that agencies and enrollees provide, including SSNs, to purposes consistent with the routine-use notice. You may view a copy of this notice by going to www.opm.gov/feddata/html/privacy.asp.

If you have any questions, please contact your contract representative.

Sincerely,



Frank D. Titus
Assistant Director
for Insurance Services