



TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

October 1, 2015

CHRIS TRAYLOR
EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER

Dear Texas Physician:

Health Maintenance Organizations in Texas are required by state law (Chapter 108 of the Texas Health and Safety Code) to report certain quality of care data, by service area, to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) on an annual basis. The accuracy of the data reported is greatly enhanced if health plan representatives are allowed to review the medical records of randomly selected members for specific evidence related to that member's health care. For example, DSHS collects data to report in a measure on Controlling High Blood Pressure. The specifications of this measure, developed by the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA), require clinical data beyond what is routinely collected in administrative data systems.

This data collection is permitted under HIPAA. Covered entities, including health plans, are permitted to use protected health information to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations according to HIPAA law §164.502 (a)(1)(ii). Reporting to DSHS is an operational requirement of all health plans by state law.

The purpose of this letter is to request your cooperation in allowing health plan staff to have access to your medical records. The data that they collect is reported to DSHS in the aggregate by plan service area. In other words, the health plan staff will use the results of this review to report an average for all plan members to DSHS. Patient level data is not collected by DSHS from health plans. Patient data should not be sent to DSHS.

June 15, 2016 is this year's deadline for health plans to report HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set) data to DSHS. The data collected will be used by DSHS to develop reports for use by consumers and employer purchasers in making selections among health plans, and by health plans themselves in developing ways to improve their plan's performance. As an example, two pages from the most recent publication on Texas HMOs, which can be found in its entirety at www.dshs.state.tx.us/thcic, are attached to this letter.

If you have any questions regarding DSHS' HMO reporting requirements or how data are reported to this agency free of any patient identifier, please contact the THCIC program at (512) 776-7261 or via email at thcichelp@dshs.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Burns".

Bruce Burns.

Interim Director, Center for Health Statistics.