

Newsbriefs

For FCHN Providers

A Letter from the Vice President of Network Management

Dear Providers,

As the Vice President of Network Management, it is my job to ensure that First Choice Health (FCH) retains the distinction as the Northwest Region's largest independent PPO network. With the approximate one million lives that access you, our providers, in this region, we offer an alternative to other large commercial payors.

In order to remain an attractive option as a provider network to the Labor Trusts, self-insured employers and our other payor clients, FCH found the need to expand regionally in order to be better able to service regional and multi-state employers and payors. To accomplish this regional growth we've expanded our provider network in Oregon, Idaho, Alaska and Montana.

Oregon: First Choice Health purchases Healthcare Direct

We are proud to announce that effective July 1, 2006; First Choice Health purchased Healthcare Direct. Established in 2000, Healthcare Direct (HCD) is the largest and, fastest growing, independent network in Oregon/Southern Washington, currently accessed by over 100 Oregon/Southern Washington clients (third party administrators, and plan sponsors), and totaling over 100,000 members. HCD is also one of the broadest networks with over 13,000 medical providers representing all medical specialties. Please join us in welcoming our new associates.

Some providers in Southwest Washington may have a contract with both FCH and HCD. There are no changes to either contract at this time. If there are any changes to this approach over the next few months, we will be in direct communication with you.

Montana: First Choice Health to work through Health InfoNet

Instead of maintaining direct contracts with providers in Montana, FCH elected to develop a partnership with the broader and better established network, Health InfoNet (HIN) in Montana. HIN is Montana's largest PPO based in Billings, Montana.

CIGNA HealthCare has been accessing the HIN network in Montana since January 1, 2006. Other FCH payors will begin accessing HIN effective August 1, 2006.

Our Montana providers have been notified of this change and we are pleased to be able to continue to work with them through HIN.

Alaska and Idaho Concentrated Provider Recruitment into the FCH PPO Network

First Choice is maintaining and expanding our directly contracted network of providers in the states of Alaska and Idaho. We are pleased to welcome many new providers in Idaho and Alaska to First Choice Health.

First Choice thanks you for your partnership. We are looking forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Beth Johnson

Newsletter Date
July 2006

Volume 2 Issue 3



ACCREDITED
HEALTH UTILIZATION
MANAGEMENT
PROVIDER
CREDENTIALING

Inside this issue:

A Letter from the Vice President of Network Management	1
The FCH Quality Program	2
Claims Scanning—EDI Update	2
Technology Awards to Help Doctors Deliver Better Care	3
Feedback from FCH Providers	3
Holiday Schedule, Third Quarter	3
Provider Relations Staff Update	3
Costco Executive Health Plan	4
Client Changes	4
National Provider Identifiers	4
State of the Network	4
Provider Bulletin Index	4

The First Choice Health Quality Program

Each year, the FCH Quality Improvement Council creates and oversees the Quality Management Program. This is an important activity of the Company that is designed to monitor, measure and promote cost-effective and high value health care services. The FCH Quality Program exists in tandem with the Medical Management, Case Management, Credentialing, and Operational Programs with an emphasis on URAC accreditation goals. The Program provides a road map for quality improvement projects.

Key activities in 2005 included:

- Achieved URAC Full Accreditation in Case Management
- Achieved URAC Full Re-accreditation in Health Utilization Management
- Achieved URAC Full Re-accreditation in Provider Credentialing
- Initiated an Electronic Medical Records Grant Program which provided ten \$20,000 awards to help practices enhance the quality of care
- Participated on the Puget Sound Health Alliance Board of Directors to improve the quality of patient care for a healthier community, at a price people can afford
- Facilitated the Forum Chronic Care Work Group, a collaborative group of clinicians and other key stakeholders, that promotes enhancement of chronic illness care in Washington

Key activities for 2006 include:

- Expansion of our Electronic Medical Record / Health Information Technology Grant Program through the newly created Washington Health Information Collaborative – a partnership between FCH, the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), the Puget Sound Health Alliance, and Qualis Health. Both FCH and the HCA have contributed \$500,000 to create a \$1,000,000 award fund pool. (For more information please go to www.WAHealthInfoCollaborative.org)
- Co –Sponsorship with the Washington Academy of Family Physicians of the Scribner Courage in Health Care Awards Program to encourage and acknowledge health care professionals who have demonstrated extraordinary service and professional courage. The second award event is anticipated in the October 2006. (For more information contact Bill Reynolds at 206-268-2430)
- Continued participation on the Puget Sound Health Alliance Board of Directors
- Continued leadership of the Forum Chronic Care Work Group

The goals of the Quality Program are reassessed annually and designed to improve overall function and outcomes throughout the organization and within our community.

Claims Scanning— EDI Update

On February 1, 2005, First Choice Health Network (FCHN) began the process of converting scanned images of paper claims into HIPAA compliant 837 EDI claims. Since then, we have converted and electronically priced a total of 355,696 claims.

The continued efficiencies of scanning technology have proven to be a valuable tool for effectively scanning paper claims and pricing the converted EDI files, all within 2 business days. This has led to a significant reduction of paper claims volume for which manual pricing is required and has allowed us to maintain a consistent 3-5 business day turnaround.

In an effort to enhance our electronic claim processes beyond converting scanned paper claims into EDI formatted files, we are continuing to work extensively with our payors to arrange direct electronic transmissions of priced claims to their office for even faster payment of services. In 2005, we priced 1,422,274 EDI claims and between January and May 2006, we have priced 552,741 electronically submitted claims.

Our goal is to use all available technologies as a means to enhance the level of service we offer to our Preferred Providers, and in doing so, will continue striving to exceed your expectations of service to include claim processing turnaround and efficiencies.

For questions regarding our paper claim scanning process or to find out how your office can submit your claims electronically, please contact our Provider Relations Department at 800-231-6935, extension 2103.

\$1 Million in Technology Awards Available to Help Doctors Deliver Better Care

As you may remember, First Choice Health Network awarded ten grants of twenty thousand dollars a piece to small and rural providers last year. This year awards totaling \$1 million will be available to physician clinics and hospitals to promote their use of electronic medical record systems.

Funding comes from First Choice Health and the Health Care Authority, each of which has dedicated \$500,000 to the 2006 awards program. Qualis Health will provide consultation on Information Technology, quality improvement and other technical support to award recipients. The Puget Sound Health Alliance provides award administration services for the program.

The awards of up to \$20,000 each will be presented this fall to qualifying applicants. The innovative technology awards are designed to improve the safety and quality of care by allowing health care practitioners to instantly and securely access accurate individual patient medical records, in addition to looking at aggregated data for improved decision-making. Electronic medical records will enable more consistent preventive care and enhanced care for patient populations with diabetes, heart failure, coronary artery disease, and hypertension.

Feedback from FCH Providers

With the regional expansion of First Choice Health, we are reassessing functions at FCH and aligning departments to become more efficient.

As part of that process, First Choice Health has engaged Market Street Research to survey our physician providers and hospitals. We want to get your feedback on the ways that we serve you well and in the areas you may like to see us improve.

These surveys will take place during the month of July and we wanted to alert you that you may be contacted. We look forward to your feedback and hope to be able to incorporate changes you might like to see occur.

Holiday Schedule, Third Quarter 2006

Our offices will be closed in observance of **Independence Day** on Tuesday, July 4th and **Labor Day** on Monday, September 4th.

You may leave a voice message in our provider relations voicemail systems. We will respond to all messages within 24 hours of the following business day.

If you have any questions regarding our schedule, please contact the Provider Relations Department at (800) 231-6935, ext. 2103.

Provider Relations Staff Update

We are pleased to announce staff changes in the Provider Relations Department.

In the Seattle office, Kendra Bunch is the new Supervisor of Provider Relations. Kendra is a valuable asset to our organization, having prior experience in FCH PPO business leadership and a strong healthcare background. We also welcome Christine Lyons as a Provider Relations Specialist to the Seattle team.

They join our team members Alyson Penney and Susan Brown in Seattle; and Cyndi Petersen and Charmaine Miller in Spokane.

Please join us in welcoming Kendra and Christine!

If you have questions, need information or assistance, please give us a call at our toll free number (800) 231-6935, extension 2103.

Costco Executive Health Plan

Effective with January 1, 2006 dates of service, claims for Costco Executive Member Health Plan should be submitted to Health Net Health Plan of Oregon at PO Box 14103 Lexington, KY 40512. Executive Members received new ID cards and have new member numbers---Please update your patient records so that claims are submitted to the correct plan with the correct member number. Submitting a claim with an incorrect number delays the processing of the claim. Please Note: First Choice Health Administrators will continue to process all Costco executive member claims with dates of service December 31, 2005 and prior. We are requesting that claims with dates of service prior to January 1, 2006 be sent to First Choice Health Administrators at: PO Box 12659, Seattle, WA 98111-4659.



Reminder!

Client Changes

The Alaska Carpenters Health & Welfare Trust Fund is administered by Welfare & Pension Administrative Service (WPAS) effective July 1, 2006. The Trust represents the merged Northern Alaska Carpenters Health & Security Trust, which was administered by Zenith Administrators, and the Southern Alaska Carpenters Trust, which was administered by Administrative Services Inc. All claims should be sent to WPAS.

HealthDataInsights dba MVPPO terminated their direct access to FCHN effective 4/30/06. It is their intention to continue existing groups' FCHN access through CCN Managed Care.

Washington-Idaho Carpenters Health & Security Trust accesses FCHN in Washington through Beech Street.
Washington-Idaho Carpenters Health & Security Trust accesses FCHN in Idaho. Claims for both states should be sent to ASI.

National Provider Identifiers

National Provider Identifiers (NPIs) will be required on electronic claims sent on or after May 23, 2007.

According to recent statistics only about 16% of providers in our region have obtained their NPI. Getting your NPI is the first step in the process of meeting the compliance date. CMS is advising providers to obtain their number six months before the compliance date. If you have not yet applied for your NPI, First Choice Health encourages you to do so. You will be assigned a NPI upon successful completion of an application form. The form can be submitted on paper or over the Internet, per the instructions of CMS.

Once you have your NPI please provide this information to First Choice Health so that we can update our systems.

You may notify us by letter, fax, or email through our web-site to our Provider Data Maintenance Department
Mail to: 600 University Street, Suite 1400 Seattle, WA 98101 Fax to: (206) 268-2940 Website: www.1stchoiceppo.com

Learn more about NPI and how to apply by visiting www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/ on the CMS website.

State of the Network Reporting

In an ongoing effort to maximize savings to your clients, FCHN is always working to recruit new providers, target expansion areas, and fill any gaps that may exist within our network service area. We are pleased to announce that as of May 31, 2006, our network **includes 27,376 practitioners, 115 hospitals, and 1,093 ancillary facilities.**

Provider Bulletin Index

Since January 2006, all providers should have received the following provider bulletins:

Control Number PRB-02-06-01

SUBJECT CIGNA HealthCare Replaces CareCentrix as National Provider of Durable Medical Equipment, Respiratory Equipment, and Enteral Nutrition **

** Please call Provider Relations to request a copy of this targeted Provider Bulletin