

## **NOTICE OF THE PRIVACY PRACTICES OF THE MICHIGAN TROWEL TRADES HEALTH & WELFARE FUND**

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY AND CONTACT THE FUND'S PRIVACY OFFICER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

The Michigan Trowel Trades Health & Welfare Fund ("Plan") is required by the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) to make sure that health information that identifies you is kept private to the extent required by law.

The Plan is also required to give you this Notice regarding

- 1) the Plan's uses and disclosures of Protected Health Information ("PHI")
- 2) your privacy rights with respect to your PHI;
- 3) the Plan's duties with respect to your PHI;
- 4) your right to file a complaint with the Plan and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and
- 5) the person or office to contact for further information about the Plan's privacy practices.

The term "Protected Health Information" (PHI) includes all individually identifiable health information transmitted or maintained by the Plan, regardless of form (oral, written, electronic) and, when applicable, includes "genetic information." De-identified information, which does not identify an individual and that cannot reasonably be expected to be used to identify an individual, is not PHI.

This Notice and its contents are intended to conform to the requirements of HIPAA. Please be advised that other entities that provide services to you related to your participation in the Plan have issued or may issue separate notices regarding disclosure of PHI that is maintained on the Plan's behalf by those entities.

### **How the Plan May Use and Disclose PHI About You**

The following categories describe different ways that the Plan uses and discloses PHI. Not every use or disclosure in each category will be listed. However, all of the ways the Plan is permitted to use and disclose information will fall within one of the categories. Except for the purposes described in the categories below, we will use and disclose PHI only with your written authorization. You may revoke such authorization at any time by writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer.

#### **Uses and Disclosures to Carry Out Treatment, Payment and Health Care Operations**

**For Payment.** The Plan may use and disclose PHI about you for payment purposes such as to determine eligibility for Plan benefits, to facilitate payment for the treatment and services you receive from health care providers, to determine benefit responsibility under the Plan, or to

coordinate Plan coverage. For example, the Plan may tell your health care provider about your eligibility for benefits to confirm whether payment will be made for a particular service. The Plan may also share PHI with a utilization review or precertification service provider. Likewise, the Plan may share PHI with another entity to assist with the coordination of benefit payments.

**For Health Care Operations.** The Plan may use and disclose PHI about you for Plan operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the Plan. For example, the Plan may use PHI in connection with conducting quality assessment and improvement activities; underwriting, premium rating, and other activities relating to Plan coverage; reviewing and responding to appeals; conducting or arranging for medical review, legal services, audit services, and fraud and abuse detection programs; and general Plan administrative activities. The disclosure of PHI that is genetic information for underwriting purposes is prohibited and the Plan will not disclose any of your genetic information for such purposes.

**To Inform You About Treatment, Treatment Alternatives or Other Health Related Benefits.** The Plan may use your PHI for treatment purposes and other related benefits. The Plan may use your PHI to identify whether you may benefit from communications from the Plan regarding (1) available provider networks or available products or services under the Plan, (2) your treatment, (3) case management or care coordination, or (4) recommended alternative treatments, therapies, health care providers, or settings of care. For instance, the Plan may forward a communication to a participant who is a smoker regarding a smoking-cessation program.

**For Disclosure to the Fund's Board of Trustees.** The Plan may disclose your PHI to the Plan's Board of Trustees (Plan Sponsor) for plan administration functions performed by the Plan Sponsor on behalf of the Plan including, but not limited to, reviewing appeals. The Plan may use or disclose "summary health information" to the Plan Sponsor for obtaining premium bids or for modifying, amending or terminating the group health plan. "Summary health information" is information that summarizes the claims history, claims expenses or type of claims experienced by individuals for whom the Plan Sponsor has provided health benefits under a group health plan and from which identifying information has been deleted in accordance with federal regulations.

**Business Associates.** The Plan may disclose PHI to its business associates that perform functions on the Plan's behalf or provide the Plan with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, the Plan may use another company to perform billing services on its behalf. All of the Plan's business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in their agreement with the Plan.

#### **Other Uses and Disclosures for Which Consent, Authorization or Opportunity to Agree or Object is Not Required**

**When Legally Required.** The Plan will disclose your PHI when it is required to do so by any federal, state or local law.

**For Public Health Activities.** The Plan may disclose your PHI for public health activities such

as the reporting of vital events such as birth or death or the tracking of products regulated by the Food and Drug Administration.

**For Reporting Abuse, Neglect or Domestic Violence.** The Plan may disclose your PHI when required by law to report information about abuse, neglect or domestic violence to public authorities if there exists a reasonable belief that you may be a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. In such case, the Plan will promptly inform you that such a disclosure has been or will be made unless that notice would cause a risk of serious harm. For the purpose of reporting child abuse or neglect, it is not necessary to inform the minor that such a disclosure has been or will be made. Disclosure may generally be made to the minor's parents or other representatives although there may be circumstances under federal or state law when the parents or other representatives may not be given access to the minor's PHI.

**To Conduct Health Oversight Activities.** The Plan may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for authorized activities including audits, civil administrative or criminal investigations, inspections, licensure or disciplinary action. However, the Plan may not disclose your PHI if you are the subject of an investigation and the investigation does not arise out of or is not directly related to your receipt of health care or public benefits.

**In Connection With Judicial and Administrative Proceedings.** As permitted or required by state law, the Plan may disclose your PHI in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal as expressly authorized by such order or in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process, but only when the Plan receives satisfactory assurance from the party seeking the information that reasonable efforts have been made to you of the request or, if such assurance is not forthcoming, if the Plan has made a reasonable effort to notify you about the request or to obtain an order protecting your PHI.

**For Law Enforcement Purposes.** As permitted or required by state law, the Plan may disclose your PHI to a law enforcement official for certain law enforcement purposes, including the reporting of certain types of wounds, upon the request of a law enforcement official for locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness, missing person, or crime victim, to report a death, to report a crime on the premises and to report a crime in a medical emergency. A disclosure of information about an individual who is or is suspected to be a crime victim may be made only if a) the individual agrees to the disclosure or the Plan is unable to obtain the individual's agreement because of emergency circumstances, b) the law enforcement official represents that the information is not intended to be used against the individual and the immediate law enforcement activity would be materially and adversely affected by waiting to obtain the individual's agreement and c) the Plan determines disclosure is in the best interest of the individual as determined by the exercise of its best judgment.

**To Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors.** The Plan may release PHI to coroners or medical examiners for duties authorized by law or to funeral directors consistent with applicable law.

**Organ and Tissue Donation.** If you are an organ donor, the Plan may release PHI to

organizations that handle organ procurement or transplantation.

**For Research.** The Plan may disclose your PHI for research subject to certain conditions regarding the manner in which the research is conducted.

**In the Event of a Serious Threat to Health or Safety.** The Plan may disclose your PHI if necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to your health or safety or to the health and safety of the public or another person when consistent with applicable law and standards of ethical conduct and the Plan in good faith believes such use or disclosure is necessary.

**For Specified Government Functions.** In certain circumstances, federal regulations may require the Plan to use or disclose your PHI to facilitate specified government functions related to the military and veterans affairs, national security and intelligence activities, protective services for the president and others, and correctional institutions and inmates.

**For Workers' Compensation.** The Plan may release your PHI to the extent necessary to comply with laws related to workers' compensation or similar programs.

### **Other Uses and Disclosures**

The Plan will not (1) supply confidential information to another entity for its marketing purposes in violation of the privacy regulations, or (2) sell your confidential information in violation of the privacy regulations.

Other uses and disclosures of your PHI not covered by this Notice or the laws that apply to the Plan will be made only if you provide a written authorization.

The Plan asks you to complete an authorization form if you would like someone, such as a spouse, to be able to have access to your PHI.

If you provide the Plan with written authorization to use or disclose your PHI, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, the Plan will no longer use or disclose PHI about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that the Plan is unable to take back any disclosures that the Plan has already made with your permission.

## **YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING THE PRIVACY OF YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

You have the following rights:

**The right to request restrictions or limitations** on the PHI the Plan uses or discloses about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the PHI we disclose to someone involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not share information about a particular diagnosis or treatment with your spouse. The Plan is not, however, required to agree to your

request with the exception of a request for a restriction of a disclosure of PHI pertaining solely to a health care item or service for which the health care provider involved has been paid out of pocket that is for purposes of carrying out payment or health care operations (and not for the purposes of carrying out treatment).

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer. In your request, you must tell the Plan (1) what information you want to limit, (2) whether you want to limit the Plan's use, disclosure or both; and (3) to whom the limits apply.

**The right to request to receive confidential communication** of your PHI by an alternative means or at an alternative location if a disclosure of your PHI could endanger you. The request must be made in writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer and must specify the alternative location or other method of communication that you prefer (for example, using an alternate address). Your request must include a statement that the restriction is necessary to prevent a disclosure that could endanger you. The Plan does not refuse to accommodate such a request unless the request imposes an unreasonable administrative burden. If the request is granted, the documentation of your request will be placed in your record.

**The right to access documents regarding your eligibility, payment of claims, appeals** or other similar documents in your Designated Record Set for inspection and/or copying. If the information you request is in an electronic health record, you may request that these records be transmitted electronically. Your request for access to documents with your PHI must be in writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer. When a request for access is accepted (in whole or in part), you will be notified of the decisions and you may then inspect the PHI, copy it, or both, in the form or format requested at a time and place convenient to you and the Plan. If you would like, you may receive a summary of the requested PHI instead of your entire record, for a reasonable fee. You may also receive a copy of your PHI by mail if you prefer. (The Plan charges a reasonable, cost-based fee for copying, including labor and supplies [for instance, paper, computer disks] and for postage if you request that the information be mailed. No fee is charged for retrieving or handling the PHI or for processing the participant's request for access.)

If a request for access is denied (in whole or in part), the Plan will grant access to PHI for which there are no grounds to deny access. The Plan will also inform you why your request for access was denied, how to appeal the denial (if the denial is reviewable), and how to file complaints with the Plan and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you request a review and the denial is reviewable, the Plan will designate a licensed health care professional, not involved in the original denial decision, to serve as a reviewing official, and will notify you in writing of the reviewing official's determination.

**The right to request to amend your PHI if it is inaccurate or incomplete.** You may request that your PHI be amended. That request must be in writing to the Fund's Privacy Officer and include a reason why your PHI should be amended. If you do not include a reason, the Plan will not act on the request. When a request for amendment is accepted (in whole or in part), the Plan will inform you that your request for amendment has been accepted. The Plan will request from you permission to contact other individuals or health care entities that you identify that need to be informed of the amendment(s), and will inform them and other entities with whom the Plan

does business who may rely on the disputed PHI to your detriment. The Plan will identify the record(s) that are the subject of the amendment request and will append the amendment to the record.

If a request for amendment is denied, you will be notified why the request was denied (e.g., the information requested was not created by the Plan, is accurate and complete, is not part of the record, or may not legally be changed such as information compiled in anticipation of a civil, criminal or administrative proceeding), how to file a statement of disagreement or a request that the Plan provide the request for amendment and the denial in any future release of the disputed PHI, and how to file a complaint with the Plan or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you choose to write a statement of disagreement with the denial decision, the Plan may write a rebuttal statement and will provide a copy to the participant, and the Plan will include the request for amendment, denial letter, statement of disagreement, and rebuttal (if any), with any future disclosures of the disputed PHI. If you do not choose to write a statement of disagreement with the denial decision, the Plan is not required to include the request for amendment and denial decision letter with future disclosures of the disputed PHI unless you request the Plan to do so. When the Plan receives notification that your PHI has been amended, the Plan will ensure that the amendment is appended to your records, and will inform entities with whom it does business that may use or rely on your PHI of the amendment and require them to make the necessary corrections.

**The right to obtain an accounting of disclosures of your PHI.** The right to an accounting extends to disclosures, other than disclosures made (1) for the purposes of treatment, payment or health care operations, including those made to business associates (vendors), (2) to an individual (or personal representative) about his or her own PHI, (3) incident to an otherwise permitted use or disclosure, (4) pursuant to an authorization, (5) to persons involved in the patient's care or other notification purposes, (6) as part of a limited data set, (7) for national security or intelligence purposes and (8) to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials.

To request an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer. Your request must specify a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years. You may request and receive an accounting of disclosures once during any twelve (12) month period for no charge. If you request more than one accounting within the same twelve (12) month period, a reasonable, cost-based fee may be charged. The Plan will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

You also have the right to an accounting of disclosures of electronic health records for purposes of payment, treatment and health care operations. The right to such an accounting depends on whether the Plan maintains such electronic health records and, if so, when the electronic health records were acquired by the Plan and when the disclosure occurred.

**The right to receive a paper copy of this Notice** and any revisions to this Notice. You may request a copy of this Notice in writing to the Plan's Privacy Officer at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this Notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this Notice.

**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 PHI or allowed to take any action for you. Proof of such authority may take one of the following forms:

- a power of attorney for health care purposes;
- a court order of appointment of the person as the conservator or guardian of the individual; or
- a birth certificate identifying the parent of a minor child.

The Plan retains discretion to deny access to your PHI 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.

## **LEGAL DUTIES OF THE MICHIGAN TROWEL TRADES HEALTH & WELFARE FUND REGARDING YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION**

The Plan is required by law to maintain the privacy of your PHI as set forth in this Notice and to provide to you this Notice of its duties and privacy practices. If your PHI is improperly accessed, acquired, used, or disclosed, the Plan will notify you, as required by law. That notification may include a description of what happened, the information involved, and the steps you can take to protect yourself.

The Plan is required to abide by the terms of this Notice, which may be amended from time to time. The Plan reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all PHI the Plan has about you as well as any information the Plan receives in the future. If the Plan changes its policies and procedures, the Plan will revise the Notice and will provide a copy of the revised Notice to you within 60 days of the change.

### ***Minimum Necessary Standard***

When using, disclosing or requesting PHI, the Plan will make reasonable efforts not to use, disclose or request more than the minimum amount of PHI necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of the use, disclosure or request, taking into consideration practical and technological limitations. When required by law, the Plan will restrict disclosures to the limited data set, or otherwise as necessary, to the minimum necessary information to accomplish the intended purpose. However, the minimum necessary standard will not apply in the following situations:

- disclosures to or requests by a health care provider for treatment;
- uses or disclosures made to the individual or pursuant to an authorization;
- disclosures made to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- uses or disclosures that are required by law; and
- uses or disclosures that are required for the Plan's compliance with legal regulations.

## **YOUR RIGHT TO FILE A COMPLAINT**

You have the right to express complaints to the Michigan Trowel Trades Health & Welfare Fund and to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services if you believe that your privacy rights have been violated. Any complaints to the Michigan Trowel Trades Health & Welfare Fund should be made in writing to the Fund's Privacy Officer. The Michigan Trowel Trades Health & Welfare Fund encourages you to express any concerns you may have regarding the privacy of your information. You will not be retaliated against in any way for filing a complaint.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE PRIVACY OFFICER**

For questions about this Notice, to exercise your privacy rights, or to file a complaint, contact the Plan's Privacy Officer, Michigan Trowel Trades Health & Welfare Fund, 6525 Centurion Drive, Lansing, Michigan 48917-9275 – (517) 321-7502.

## **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 23, 2013