

Provider Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2023



California AB 1184 and Duty to Keep Communications About Sensitive Services Confidential

California AB 1184 recently went into effect, amending the Confidentiality of Medical Information Act ("CMIA") to require health plans take specified steps to protect the confidentiality of subscribers and enrollees' medical information. This letter is to inform you of the changes associated with this law and what steps you will need to take.

The CMIA now provides greater confidentiality for patients who receive sensitive services:

- Protected individuals who have the right to consent to care are not required to obtain the authorization or consent of the primary subscriber or any other enrollee in order to receive sensitive services.

- Protected individuals may request that confidential communications regarding sensitive services be directed to their designated alternative mailing address, email, or phone number; or to their address, email, or phone number on file in their name. These communications include:

- Bills and attempts to collect payment;
- Notices of adverse benefits determinations;
- Explanation of benefits notices;
- A plan's request for additional information regarding a claim;
- Notices of a contested claim;
- The name and address of a provider, description of services provided, and other information related to a visit; and
- Any written, oral, or electronic communication from a plan that contains protected health information.

- Western Dental will not disclose medical information relating to sensitive health care services to the primary subscriber or any plan enrollees without the express authorization of the protected individual receiving the services.

If a Western Dental subscriber or enrollee inquires about keeping communications regarding sensitive services confidential, we ask that you inform them about their ability to submit a request to Western Dental. Information will also be provided to them at their initial enrollment, in their annual Evidence of Coverage, and online at Western Dental's website.

Requests for confidential communications can be submitted to:

By regular mail: Western Dental Member Services

530 S Main Street
Orange, CA 92868

By electronic mail: privacyofficer@westerndental.com

By phone: 1-800-992-3366

We will process requests received by email or phone within seven (7) calendar days, and requests received by first-class mail within fourteen (14) calendar days.

When providing sensitive services to a Western Dental enrollee, we ask that you take steps to protect the confidentiality and safety of subscribers and enrollees by asking them how they would like to receive communications about sensitive services.

Western Dental is committed to the privacy and wellbeing of our subscribers and enrollees.

If you have questions or would like additional information regarding this matter, please contact the undersigned at eroyal@westerndental.com or call 1-714-571-3681.

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Public Policy

The Plan welcomes Provider participation on its Public Policy Committee, which meets quarterly at the Plan's corporate office in Orange, California. In order to be considered for membership, please write or call the Plan's Provider Services Department at 1-800-811-5111.

Provider Dispute Resolution Process

As previously notified, providers have the right to utilize the WDS provider dispute resolution process, which was developed to provide a fast, fair and cost-effective dispute resolution mechanism. WDS will not discriminate or retaliate against a provider (including, but not limited to, the cancellation of the provider's contract) because the provider filed a provider dispute. The provider dispute process is available at no cost to the provider.

For additional information regarding the provider dispute process, please contact the Provider Relations Department at 1-800-811-5111.

Disclosure of Review Processes

Upon request, the WDS Member Services department will send you a copy of the guidelines and criteria that are used to determine if a service is covered or not when a dentist or WDS provider sends requests to WDS for benefits and/or claims for payment to an enrollee, a dentist or a member of the general public. You may ask for this information by writing to Western Dental Services, Inc., P.O. Box 14227, Orange, CA 92863, or by calling WDS Member Services at 1-800-992-3366.

Credentials

To ensure that your credentials are always current, don't forget to submit your renewed credentials to WDS **prior** to the expiration of the previous credentials. WDS must maintain copies of your current, valid California dental license, malpractice insurance cover page and DEA certificate in your provider file. Also, please remember to notify WDS Provider Relations whenever your office has a new associate dentist or dental specialist or when there are changes or updates to your credentials.

WDS is pleased to announce that in our continued efforts to make provider participation as simple as possible, WDS utilizes the services of Verifpoint, a credentialing organization with whom many of you may already be familiar due to your participation with other dental plans. Verifpoint will collect your credentials on behalf of WDS so that you do not have to provide duplicate information to WDS.

Encounter Data Submission

The California Knox-Keene Act requires all Dental HMOs to monitor plan enrollee utilization. The WDS Utilization Management (UM) Committee meets on a quarterly basis to review utilization trends to ensure that Plan enrollees are receiving services. WDS also uses the utilization data to develop new plans and review existing provider compensation for the managed care dental program.

Please submit your encounter data by the 10th day of the month for the previous month's encounters. To submit monthly encounter data, please use a standard ADA claim form.

Language Assistance Program

Many people who live in Western Dental's service area speak a language other than English. Even if they know some English, they may prefer to speak another language when discussing their dental health or dental plan benefit matters. Having a fully functioning Language Assistance Program ("LAP") in your office is a state requirement that became effective January 1, 2009.



Since 2009, we have contacted our provider network seeking services in a foreign language to determine if your offices knew how to handle such requests. Thank you to all offices that have provided the proper language assistance. For those who did not know how, the phone call then changed into an instructional call so that your offices could properly handle such calls in the future. As a reminder, here are some of the most important facts:

- Language Assistance is always available at no cost to both the provider and the member.
- If you need assistance with a Western Dental member calling your office requesting services in another language, you may instruct the patient/member to contact the Member Services department at **1-800-992-3366**, or you may call for them. Simply request to speak to someone who speaks the preferred language, and the Western Dental member service representative will make arrangements for an interpreter to join the call. Please allow time for connection to this service.
- Face-to-face interpreters in languages other than English (including Sign Language) may be available in

some circumstance for special instructions. Western Dental Member Services department at **1-800-992-3366** has more information available about this service.

- Vital Documents such as plan brochures, provider directories, important forms and letters about Western Dental services, language rights and certain outreach materials are produced in English and Spanish in accordance with LAP requirements. You may instruct your patients who need these documents in Spanish to call the plan to receive these materials.

As a reminder, the Language Assistance Program (LAP) bulletin is included with your rosters each month for reference. Additionally, we have sent out a reminder card that you can post near your reception desk to make it easy for your office to contact Western Dental when language assistance is needed. We will continue to make "secret shopper" calls to confirm that our providers understand and know how to use the LAP. If you need more information regarding LAP requirements for contracting dentists, please contact Provider Relations at **1-800-811-5111**.

To Report a PROVIDER DIRECTORY Inaccuracy

In compliance with State requirements for providing an accurate provider directory, Western Dental Services now offers several easy ways to update your information or report a potential provider directory inaccuracy. The regulation requires WDS to verify and confirm with all contracted providers that their information is current and up to date. Notifications will be sent to all contracted providers every six months and will require an affirmative response within 30 days acknowledging the notification was received and information about any applicable changes to the data on file. To report any updates or provider directory inaccuracies contact Provider Relations at 1-800-811-5111, via email at **ProviderDirectoryUpdate@westerndental.com** or by using the online change form available on our website, **<http://www.westerndental.com>**.