STATE OF CALIFORNIA-HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

GRAY DAVIS, *Governor*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
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November 9, 2001

MMCD Policy Letter 01-02

TO:
[ ] County Organized Health System Plan (COHS)
[X] Geographic Managed Care (GMC) Plans
[X] Prepaid Health Plans (PHP)
[X] Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) Plans
[X] Two-Plan Model Plans

SUBJECT: Conversion of MESH to the Medi-Cal Web Site

PURPOSE

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs) that the Medi-Cal Extranet for State Healthcare (MESH) system will be phased out, beginning in December of 2001. The existing secure Medi-Cal web site will replace MESH. Fiscal Intermediary Access to MEDS Eligibility (FAME) file downloads, encounter data uploads, and all related transactions for current MESH users will move from MESH to the Medi-Cal web site. The Medi-Cal Managed Care Division (MMCD) is requesting confirmation of each affected plan's ability or inability to access FAME files and upload encounter data at the new site, and specific reasons for any plan's inability to access the new site. In addition, MMCD is asking for any comments, concerns, or questions your plan has about this change on the enclosed MESH conversion response form. The response form also lists the minimum system requirements necessary to obtain files from the site. If MMCD does not receive a response from your plan by November 15, 2001, MMCD will assume that you have no significant issues with the MESH-to-Internet conversion. Receiving responses by this date will give MMCD two to four weeks to address your concerns before the December Implementation.

BACKGROUND

Currently, all managed care plans, except County Organized Health Systems (COHSs), are obtaining Medi-Cal beneficiary information and uploading encounter data via MESH through daily and/or monthly downloads and uploads. Electronic Data Systems Corporation (EDS) maintains MESH. EDS recently proposed making the FAME file and encounter data transmissions accessible through Medi-Cal's Public Internet Infrastructure. This is consistent with the Department of Health Service's (DHS) desire

to have a single entry point to Medi-Cal related sources. DHS agreed to EDS' proposal regarding the design aspects of the conversion. The development, testing and implementation phases are the next steps in the conversion process.

The new file upload and download site will reside on the current secure Medi-Cal web site. The site was developed using the existing infrastructure and is currently in production for other Medi-Cal related transactions. Cosmetic changes are being made to the new site to bring it into conformance to the State's Style Implementation Guidelines for State-related web sites. MMCD does not anticipate any problems during the conversion, but please keep in mind the possibility of unforeseen difficulties occuring during the testing phase which may affect the development, testing, or implementation timelines.

The conversion will occur as follows:

October 31, 2001	**Development** phase is expected to be completed.
November 1, 2001	**Testing** phase is expected to begin and continue through November 30, 2001 for current MESH users that want to test the change prior to the implementation. Test phase participants will be notified via email of the official testing start date, as well as the process of accessing the site. Log-on procedures, including user names and passwords, are expected to change.
December 2001	**Implementation** into Production is expected to begin. All MCPs can begin accessing the new web site through the Public Internet using their Internet Service Provider (ISP). A 90-day transition period is tentatively scheduled to start. For those MESH users that were unable to test prior to the implementation, the test region will be available during this period.
March 1, 2002	**Termination** of DHS' contract with Sprint for the private network which supported MESH is expected to occur.

DISCUSSION

Attendees of the March 21, 2001 MIS Workgroup reviewed EDS' proposal for the conversion from MESH to the existing secure Medi-Cal website. All attendees expressed approval for the MESH conversion, primarily because of reduced costs to the plans and greater ease of access to the FAME files and encounter data services. MMCD requested meeting attendees to submit questions about the proposal. DHS staff responded to those questions as follows:

- What Protocol will be used? Will a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) be used and will the security level be HIPAA compliant?
  The HTTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol) protocol will be used. The file transfer protocol will not be allowed after conversion is complete. The new system will have a front end and back end Firewall Server for security and will be HIPAA compliant.

- Will a Third Party validate the security of the Firewalls?
  No third party will be validating the security of the firewall. This website has been functional for quite a while. MESH will be added to the Medi-cal website. The site has been tested significantly since it was implemented. The testing document will be presented to DHS at a walkthrough with the results.

- Are any Health Plans performing Beta Testing?
  Yes, a test site will be up and will run concurrently with the current MESH website. Plans will be asked to submit test files.

- What is the contingency plan in case there are problems with the crossover from MESH to Internet?
  If the crossover were to fail during the trial period, Plans would still have the current MESH access to FAME files.

- Will the Internet access match the current site regarding file availability and encounter data?
  Yes.

- Will it have at least the same functionality as MESH currently has? If not, what will be lost? If it has more, what are the new functions?
  The new site will have the same file upload and download capability. In addition, providers can check share of cost information, upload claims, check Medicare drug pricing, etc.

- What will the end-user cost be (from the plan's perspective)? Will the State pass any additional charges onto the plans?
  The only cost to the plans will be the cost of their Internet Service Provider (ISP). The State will impose no additional charges.

PLAN RESPONSE REQUESTED

MMCD is requesting each current MESH user to either confirm its readiness for, or describe any problem it expects to encounter with, the conversion from MESH to the secure Medi-Cal web site. Any anticipated inability to access the web site for purposes of FAME file downloads, encounter data uploads, and related transactions must be described. DHS will address any stated difficulties as soon as possible so as not to delay the conversion. Please complete and return the enclosed response form that is applicable to your plan by November 15, 2001. Again, no response from a plan by that date will be interpreted as indicating full readiness for the conversion. If you have any questions, please contact Roy Johnson, Chief of the Systems Support Unit at (916) 651-6639.

Sincerely,

Cheri Rice

Cheri Rice, Chief
Medi-Cal Managed Care Division

Enclosure

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MESH CONVERSION PLAN RESPONSE FORM
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN BY NOVEMBER 15, 2001 TO:

DEPT. OF HEALTH SERVICES
MMCD/SYSTEMS SUPPORT UNIT
ATTN: SUE LYLE
714 P STREET, ROOM 523
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

PLAN NAME:_____ PLAN NUMBER(S):_____

To utilize the web site, the minimum system requirements are Windows 95 or higher, a Web browser, and a 28.8 kbps or faster modem.

_____ OUR PLAN **CURRENTLY HAS ACCESS** TO THE INTERNET. ACCESS IS VIA:

- _____ kbps (speed) MODEM
- ISDN
- Cable MODEM
- DSL
- T1 or T3
- OTHER: _____

_____ OUR PLAN **WILL HAVE ACCESS** TO THE INTERNET BY (DATE): _____

_____ OUR PLAN **WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCESS** FAME FILES AND ENCOUNTER DATA SERVICES VIA THE SECURE MEDI-CAL WEBSITE.

REASON: _____

_____

_____

_____

COMMENTS, CONCERNS, OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONVERSION:

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

Information Systems Officer Signature/Date *Plan CEO Signature/Date*

If you specified that you are unable to utilize the new site, or you posted questions, who would you like a response directed to?

Name: _____ *Title/Position:* _____

*email:*_____ *Phone:(_____)*_____