

Karleen Jackson
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99011-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Sherry Hill
Public Affairs Director
907.465.1618
cell: 907.321.2838
sherry.hill@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 27, 2008

Contact: Ann Potempa, (907) 269-7957, Cell (907) 240-9158
Sarana Schell, (907) 269-8041, Cell (907) 240-7462

State to require tamper-resistant prescriptions for Medicaid program

New regulation to take effect April 1

(Anchorage, AK) — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services will start requiring health care providers to use tamper-resistant prescriptions for Medicaid recipients starting April 1, 2008.

These special prescription forms can prevent people from forging prescriptions and diverting medications to others who misuse or sell them illegally. Alaska's Medicaid program could save up to \$1 million preventing prescription fraud, said Dave Campana, Medicaid pharmacy program manager.

"We want to avoid having Medicaid pay for unnecessary medications," Campana said. "And those diverted medications could lead to someone becoming dependent on the medications."

Starting in April, all prescriptions written or typed on paper must use tamper-resistant forms in order to be reimbursed by Alaska's Medicaid program. The federal government issued a requirement for all states to implement a tamper-resistant prescription program for Medicaid as of April 1, 2008.

Each paper prescription form must include at least three tamper-resistant features to prevent unauthorized copying of the prescription, erasure or modification of the form, and the use of counterfeit prescriptions. Two examples of these features to prevent unauthorized copying are a watermark and special ink that changes colors or disappears when the ink is warmed.

The Department of Health and Social Services is developing a new "E-prescription" program for Medicaid, which will allow doctors and other providers to electronically transmit a prescription request from their computers to a pharmacy. Electronic prescriptions are exempt from the tamper-proof paperwork unless the prescriptions are submitted for controlled drugs, which primarily include pain medications, Campana said. Filing prescriptions electronically will help solve the problem of deciphering a doctor's handwriting.

Medicaid is a program funded by the state and federal governments to provide financial assistance to low-income and disabled Alaskans needing health care. During state fiscal year 2007, more than 128,000 Alaskans were enrolled in Medicaid.

For more information about the new regulation about tamper-resistant prescriptions, visit <http://hss.state.ak.us/apps/publicnotice/Regulations.aspx>. Select "Filed with Lt. Governor" in the Status field and type "tamper resistant prescriptions" in the Project field before hitting the search button.

###