



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 16, 2021

HIPAA and APIPA Breach Notification

On May 5, 2021, the State of Alaska Security Office notified the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), through proactive surveillance, of a cyberattack that involved unauthorized access to a DHSS computer system. Following the attack, DHSS engaged cybersecurity expert FireEye Mandiant (Mandiant) to help analyze the attack, contain it, eject the attacker, and provide guidance to harden and recover our systems.

DHSS remains focused on the best interests of Alaskans. The public entrusts us with important health information, and we take that responsibility very seriously. DHSS is continuing to implement measures to protect Alaskans' information, including:

- Further strengthening of our systems to deter future incidents
- Engaging with law enforcement, who are currently investigating the matter
- Offering cybersecurity protection services to our customers, such as identity theft and fraud protection insurance

As part of its response, DHSS shut down systems supporting numerous services to protect individuals' information and to deny the attacker further access. Before DHSS implemented the shutdown, the attackers potentially had access to the following types of individuals' information:

- Full names
- Dates of birth
- Social Security numbers
- Addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Driver's license numbers
- Internal identifying numbers (case reports, protected service reports, Medicaid, etc.)
- Health information
- Financial information
- Historical information concerning individuals' interaction with DHSS

What you can do

Free credit monitoring is being made available to any concerned Alaskan as a result of this breach. More information about the breach, including a press release and frequently asked questions, are available at dhss.alaska.gov. On Tuesday, Sept. 21, a toll-free hotline will be available (5 a.m. to 5 p.m. Alaska time) to

answer questions and assist people with signing up for the free credit monitoring service. That phone number and the website for the credit monitoring service will be provided on the DHSS website at dhss.alaska.gov.

Between Sept. 27 and Oct. 1, 2021, email notices will be sent to all Alaskans who have applied for a Permanent Fund Dividend which will include a code they can use to sign up for the credit monitoring service. People who don't receive a code will need to contact the toll-free hotline for assistance. Questions about the notice or actions you need to take may also be directed to DHSS at 1-888-484-9355 or PrivacyOfficial@alaska.gov, however the sign-up process for the credit monitoring service will need to go through the toll-free hotline available Sept. 21.

For more information about how to avoid identity theft, please visit the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's website at: identitytheft.gov.

Since learning of the breach, DHSS has worked around the clock to improve security and protect Alaskans' information. As required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Alaska Personal Information Protection Act (APIPA), we have made this announcement to notify all customers at the earliest possible opportunity. Notification of this security breach was delayed until now to avoid interference with a criminal investigation.

We sincerely apologize for this inconvenience. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is committed to providing service with excellence, which includes protecting your personal information.