

# Southern California Dairy Industry Security Fund

Administered By: Benefit Programs Administration  
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**To: Participants and Dependents in the Southern California Dairy Industry Security Fund**

**From: Board of Trustees**

**Subject: Certification of Creditable Coverage under HIPAA**

**Date: October 2014**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires that this Fund provide written certification of creditable coverage to you when your coverage ceases (under employer coverage and/or COBRA coverage) or when requested by you if your coverage is still in effect or if requested by you within two years after your coverage ends. The certification will specify the period(s) of creditable coverage under this Fund (including COBRA, if applicable) disregarding periods of coverage before a 63-day break. The 63-day break will not include any days between the loss of coverage and any secondary opportunity date to elect COBRA under the Trade Act of 2002.

If your coverage ends (under employer coverage and/or COBRA coverage), the certificate of creditable coverage will be provided to you automatically within a reasonable period of time after your coverage ceases. If you or someone on your behalf (including another health plan or issuer) wants to request a certificate of creditable coverage, please advise the Fund in writing at the following address:

Southern California Dairy Industry Security Fund  
c/o Benefit Programs Administration  
13191 Crossroads Parkway North, Suite 205  
City of Industry, CA 91746-3434

You (or someone on your behalf) should provide your name and the name(s) of your dependent(s) and an address(es) to which the certificate(s) should be sent. The notice will then be processed and sent on the earliest date that the Fund, acting in a reasonable and prompt fashion, can provide it. If you request in writing that the Fund send the certificate to another health plan or issuer and the other plan or issuer agrees, the certificate can be processed by means other than in writing, such as by telephone.

**Preexisting condition exclusions.** Some group health plans restrict coverage for medical conditions present before an individual's enrollment. These restrictions are known as "preexisting condition exclusions." A preexisting condition exclusion can apply only to conditions for which medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment was recommended or received within the 6 months before your "enrollment date." Your enrollment date is your first day of coverage under the plan, or, if there is a waiting period, the first day of your waiting period (typically, your first day of work). In addition, a preexisting condition exclusion cannot last for more than 12 months after your enrollment date (18 months if you are a late enrollee). Finally, a preexisting condition exclusion cannot apply to pregnancy and cannot apply to a child who is enrolled in health coverage within 30 days after birth, adoption, or placement for adoption. (Note: there are limitations on plans imposing a preexisting condition exclusion under the Affordable Care Act.) If a plan imposes a preexisting condition exclusion, the length of the exclusion must be reduced by the amount of your prior creditable coverage. Most health coverage is creditable coverage, including group health plan coverage, COBRA continuation coverage, coverage under an individual health policy, Medicare, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and coverage through high-risk pools and the Peace Corps. Not all forms of creditable coverage are required to provide certificates like this one. If you do not receive a certificate for past coverage, talk to your new plan administrator.

You can add up any creditable coverage you have, including the coverage shown on this certificate. However, if at any time you went for 63 days or more without any coverage (called a break in coverage) a plan may not have to count the coverage you had before the break.

- Therefore, once your coverage ends, you should try to obtain alternative coverage as soon as possible to avoid a 63-day break. You may use this certificate as evidence of your creditable coverage to reduce the length of any preexisting condition exclusion if you enroll in another plan.

**Right to get special enrollment in another plan.** Under HIPAA, if you lose your group health plan coverage, you may be able to get into another group health plan for which you are eligible (such as a spouse's plan), even if the plan generally does not accept late enrollees, if you request enrollment within 30 days. (Additional special enrollment rights are triggered by marriage, birth, adoption, and placement for adoption.)

- Therefore, once your coverage ends, if you are eligible for coverage in another plan (such as a spouse's plan), you should request special enrollment as soon as possible.

**Prohibition against discrimination based on a health factor.** Under HIPAA, a group health plan may not keep you (or your dependents) out of the plan based on anything related to your health. Also, a group health plan may not charge you (or your dependents) more for coverage, based on health, than the amount charged a similarly situated individual.

**Right to individual health coverage.** Under HIPAA, if you are an "eligible individual," you have a right to buy certain individual health policies (or in some states, to buy coverage through a high-risk pool) without a preexisting condition exclusion. To be an eligible individual, you must meet the following requirements:

- You have had coverage for at least 18 months without a break in coverage of 63 days or more;
- Your most recent coverage was under a group health plan (which can be shown by this certificate);
- Your group coverage was not terminated because of fraud or nonpayment of premiums;
- You are not eligible for COBRA continuation coverage or you have exhausted your COBRA benefits (or continuation coverage under a similar state provision); and
- You are not eligible for another group health plan, Medicare, or Medicaid, and do not have any other health insurance coverage.

The right to buy individual coverage is the same whether you are laid off, fired, or quit your job.

- Therefore, if you are interested in obtaining individual coverage and you meet the other criteria to be an eligible individual, you should apply for this coverage as soon as possible to avoid losing your eligible individual status due to a 63-day break.

**State flexibility.** This certificate describes minimum HIPAA protections under federal law. States may require insurers and HMOs to provide additional protections to individuals in that state.

**Health Insurance Marketplace.** There may be other coverage options for you and your family when you lose group health coverage. For example, you may be eligible to buy an individual plan through the Health Insurance Marketplace. By enrolling in coverage through the Marketplace, you may qualify for lower costs on your monthly premiums and lower out of pocket costs. You can see what your premium, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs will be before you make a decision to enroll. Being eligible for COBRA does not limit your eligibility for coverage for a tax credit through the Marketplace. For more information about the Health Insurance Marketplace, visit [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.HealthCare.gov).

**For more information.** If you have questions about your HIPAA rights, you may contact your state insurance department or the U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) toll-free at 1-866-444-3272 (for free HIPAA publications ask for publications concerning changes in health care laws). You may also contact the CMS publication hotline at 1-800-633-4227 (ask for "Protecting Your Health Insurance Coverage"). These publications and other useful information are also available on the Internet at the DOL's interactive web pages – Health Elaws, or <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HealthInsReformforConsume>.