

CR 08-109

**ORDER OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
ADOPTING PERMANENT RULES**

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services proposes to amend s. DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2., relating to confidentiality requirements of the Family Care program that prohibit disability benefit specialists from disclosing personally identifying information about a client without the client's informed consent, unless required by law.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RULE

Statutes interpreted: Sections 55.02 and 55.043, Stats.

Statutory authority: Sections 46.288 (1) and 227.11 (2) (a), Stats.

Explanation of agency authority:

The department's responsibilities for adult protective services are outlined under s. 55.02, Stats., and include requirements for the department to develop and operate a coordinated, statewide system for protective services and protective placements in cooperation with county departments. Section 55.01 (6r), Stats., defines protective services to include identification of individuals in need of services to keep the individual safe from abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

The department is required under s. 46.288 (1), Stats., to promulgate as rules prescribing the standards for performance by resource centers and for certification of care management organizations, including requirements for maintaining quality assurance and quality improvement. Section 227.11 (2) (a), Stats., provides the department, as a state agency, with general rulemaking authority interpreting the provisions of any statute enforced or administered by the department if the department considers it necessary to effectuate the purpose of the statute.

Related statute or rule:

See the "Statutes interpreted" and "Statutory authority" sections of this order.

Plain language analysis:

Chapter DHS 10 is the department's rule that guides the implementation of the department's Family Care program. Included in these provisions are standards for confidentiality which prohibit disability benefit specialists from disclosing personally identifying information about a client without the client's consent unless required by law. Because disability benefit specialists are permissive reporters, and thus not required to report abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of adults at risk under s. 55.043 (1m) (br), Stats., s. DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2., effectively prevents disability benefits specialists from making such disclosures.

In this order the department has revised s. DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2., by adding language that would permit disability benefit specialists to report abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of elder adults or adults-at-risk without violating that section's non-disclosure provisions.

Amending s. DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2., to allow disability benefit specialists to report abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation under s. 55.043 (1m) (br), Stats., would help to ensure that elder adults and adults-at-risk who may have been abused, neglected, or financially exploited are brought to the attention of the abuse, neglect and exploitation response systems outlined under s. 55.043, Stats.

Summary of, and comparison with, existing or proposed federal regulations:

42 USC 3058i (b) 8 (A) directs the state Unit on Aging (DHS-Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources) to promote the development of an elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation (ANE) system to, among other requirements, include administrative procedures as may be necessary or appropriate to ensure that the state will deal effectively with ANE cases in the state and, to coordinate the programs with other state and local programs and services for the protection of vulnerable adults, including adult protective services.

Comparison with rules in adjacent states:

Illinois: Illinois does not have a program similar to Family Care.

Iowa: Iowa does not have a program similar to Family Care.

Michigan: Michigan does not have a program similar to Family Care.

Minnesota: Minnesota does not have a program similar to Family Care.

Summary of factual data and analytical methodologies:

In response to questions concerning the role of resource center disability benefit specialists in protective services, the department reviewed and analyzed its administrative rules and policies and determined that changes were needed to ensure that its administrative rules reflect its responsibilities to coordinate and maintain a protective service system for elder adults and adults-at-risk.

Analysis and supporting documents used to determine effect on small business:

The rules do not affect businesses.

Effect on small business:

The rules do not affect businesses.

Agency contact person:

Jane A. Raymond, Advocacy & Protection Systems Developer
Department of Health Services
DLTC/Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources

1 West Wilson Street, Room 450
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DHSSStopAbuse@wisconsin.gov
608-261-5990 or 608-266-2568

Place where comments are to be submitted and deadline for submission:

Comments may be submitted to the agency contact person that is listed above until the deadline given in the upcoming notice of public hearing. The deadline for submitting comments and the notice of public hearing will be posted on the Wisconsin Administrative Rules Website at <http://adminrules.wisconsin.gov> after the hearing is scheduled.

TEXT OF PROPOSED RULE

SECTION 1. DHS 10.13 (16m) is created to read:

DHS 10.13 (16m) "Disability benefit specialist" means a person providing services to individuals ages 18 to 59 under s. DHS 10.23 (2) (d).

SECTION 2. DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2. is amended to read:

DHS 10.23 (2) (d) 2. Notwithstanding sub. (7) (b), a disability benefit specialist may not disclose information about a client without the informed consent of the client, unless required by law. A disability benefit specialist may also disclose information about a client without the informed consent of the client as permitted under s. 55.043 (1m) (br), Stats., if there is reasonable cause to believe that the adult at risk is at imminent risk of serious bodily harm, death, sexual assault, or significant property loss and is unable to make an informed judgment about whether to report the risk or if an adult at risk other than the subject of the report is at risk of serious bodily harm, death, sexual assault, or significant property loss inflicted by a suspected perpetrator.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule shall take effect on the first day of the month following publication in the Wisconsin administrative register, as provided in s. 227.22 (2) (intro.), Stats.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Dated: May 12, 2009

Karen E. Timberlake, Department Secretary

SEAL: