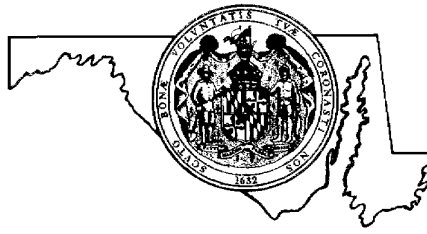


STATE OF MARYLAND



Craig P. Tanio, M.D.  
CHAIR

Ben Steffen  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION**

4160 PATTERSON AVENUE – BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21215  
TELEPHONE: 410-764-3460 FAX: 410-358-1236

January 22, 2014

Re: Data Release Policy Workgroup

Dear Payor Representatives:

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) invites you to nominate no more than two persons to participate in a workgroup to discuss data release policies for the Maryland Medical Care Database (MCDB). The MHCC staff intends to organize a workgroup composed of representatives from payors, providers, consumers, and researchers to inform the Commission's policies in two broad areas: defining data products that may be released; and developing the process for reviewing applications for data.

In the past, there has been limited interest from researchers to acquire this data; however, in the advent of the Affordable Care Act and Health Insurance Exchanges, there is a growing interest from hospitals and research organizations in accessing this data. As MHCC intends to expand release of MCDB data, ensuring consumer information is protected and determining how proprietary information should be defined, must be reassessed.

Other states and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have taken varied approaches regarding what data is released. For example, CMS offers data at three levels: Public Use Files, Limited Data Sets, and Research Identifiable Files. These categories are defined by the sensitivity of data available and the potential for identifying individuals. In addition, there are different levels of summaries that may be released, ranging from detailed claims files to summary utilization files, such as the Resident Summary File that MHCC staff developed after consultation with payors, providers, and researchers last fall. The new workgroup will be asked to review a proposed data sensitivity classification system for data fields collected in the MCDB. In addition, the workgroup will be asked to provide advice on the types of data products that would be useful to release. Based on these discussions, MHCC will develop data products for release. A priority outcome for this workgroup is to advise the MHCC staff on the privately insured data fields that will be available to hospitals for their use in decision-making under the hospital waiver recently approved by CMS.

Other states and CMS have taken a broad array of approaches to the review of applications for data. These range from staff or expert review to public and stakeholder review of applications. These are usually paired with independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight of

applications. MHCC has a consistent track record of careful review of applications, including IRB review, and ensuring the security of data once released. The workgroup will be asked to provide feedback on a proposed update to the current practices. MHCC will use this information in updating its data release policy. Staff anticipates that there will be no more than three meetings over the next three months.

Please identify one or two individuals within your organization with relevant experience and knowledge to participate in the workgroup. Please consider submitting nominees from different functional areas in your organization. The MHCC staff will make the final decision on who will participate based on our assessment of the overall technical, business, and legal expertise needed in the workgroup. The workgroup will hold its initial meeting on February 25, 2014, 3:00-4:30 pm. Please submit your nominations to Valerie Wooding, [valerie.wooding@maryland.gov](mailto:valerie.wooding@maryland.gov), by January 31, 2014. Please address any questions about this workgroup to Srinivas Sridhara, Acting Chief, Division of Cost and Quality Analysis ([srinivas.sridhara@maryland.gov](mailto:srinivas.sridhara@maryland.gov)).

Regards,

Linda Bartnyska