

Blow The Whistle on Medicaid Fraud



The Law is on Your Side

Fraud in the health care and pharmaceutical industries costs taxpayers millions of dollars a year through false claims sent to the Medicaid program.

When Medicaid is made to reimburse medical or prescription claims that are false or fraudulent, all taxpayers lose because their money has gone into the pockets of fraudsters.

Medicaid fraud can be exposed and stopped if employees are willing to step forward and report it to the authorities.

Becoming a whistleblower and reporting fraud takes courage. Workers who know about fraud might be understandably reluctant to report it out of fear of job retaliation, long-term financial consequences or difficulty in finding new employment elsewhere. Fortunately, the law is on the whistleblower's side.

A whistleblower who reports fraud on a government contract and helps file the case can collect 10 to 30 percent of the monetary damages the company pays – which in some cases can be millions of dollars.

Federal and state laws also protect whistleblowers from discrimination and employment retaliation for coming forward and reporting illegal activity.

EXAMPLES OF MEDICAID FRAUD

- Billing for nonexistent patients or patients of other providers
- Billing for services not provided
- Billing for unnecessary treatment or testing
- Billing for medical services that are actually provided by unlicensed or excluded personnel
- Off-label marketing of prescription medications
- Accepting kickbacks for referrals
- Billing for lengthy counseling sessions when only short sessions are provided
- Making a patient pay more than a Medicaid-approved co-payment for services

Who Can Be a Whistleblower?

Employees in health care and pharmaceutical companies often are in the best position to know if fraud is taking place. Salespeople might be pressured to offer kickbacks to doctors to prescribe drugs for unapproved use. Coders might be told to input false information into bills. Accountants might know if a company has tried to improve its bottom line by claiming larger reimbursements than it's entitled to. Anyone in a company might become aware of Medicaid fraud, which occurs whenever taxpayers are billed for something the program does not cover.

The False Claims Act

Under a federal law called the False Claims Act, private individuals can file a lawsuit on behalf of the federal government, alleging fraud on a government contract. That law has been on the books for 150 years. Indiana passed its own state-level version of the False Claims Act in 2005. Both the federal and state laws work in the same way, allowing the whistleblower to collect a portion of the monetary settlement or damages paid by the company.

How the False Claims Act Works

A whistleblower must file a private lawsuit against the company under the False Claims Act. In effect, the whistleblower files suit on behalf of taxpayers. The private lawsuit is a necessary step in order for the state and federal governments to investigate the fraud case and intervene.

After the government investigates the fraud case and intervenes, the case can go to trial or proceed to settlement. The federal and state governments typically will negotiate with the company that committed fraud to work out a monetary settlement that will rectify the illegal activity and reimburse the taxpayers. A whistleblower in turn would receive a percentage of that settlement

money -- or, if the case goes to trial, a percentage of any damages the Court orders the company to pay.

As with any legal case, the resolution is not immediate. It is not uncommon for several years to pass between the whistleblower filing the sealed lawsuit and the ultimate conclusion of the case.

While there is no guarantee of a large monetary reward, some whistleblowers have received millions of dollars as a result of companies having to pay multimillion-dollar settlements. In other cases, companies paid settlements in the six figures and whistleblowers' received thousands.

Who Should I Contact to Report Fraud?

Contact the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) by calling 1-800-382-1039 to report any form of health care fraud.

If you are interested in becoming a whistleblower, you should also separately contact a private attorney who specializes in bringing lawsuits under the False Claims Act. Please visit www.AttorneyGeneral.in.gov and navigate to the 'whistleblower law' under the 'criminal justice' tab to find a list of links to legal referral services that can steer you to private attorneys who can represent you in filing a private whistleblower lawsuit.

