

**HFS****Illinois Department of
Healthcare and Family Services**

JB Pritzker, Governor

Theresa A. Eagleson, Director

201 South Grand Avenue East, Springfield, Illinois 62763

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September 25, 2023

Cristal Gary, CEO
Meridian Health**RE: HealthChoice Illinois (HCI) Stand-Down Order Sanction Notice**

Dear Ms. Gary:

This letter serves as written notification to Meridian Health ("Meridian") of sanction pursuant to Section 7.16.18, Other Failures, of the Contract for Furnishing Health Services by a Managed Care Organization ("Contract") between the Department of Healthcare and Family Services ("Department") and Meridian.

The Department has determined that Meridian is in substantial non-compliance with material terms of the HealthChoice Illinois Contract. Meridian failed to comply with a Stand-Down Order issued by the Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in accordance with 305 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/12-13.1(d), on January 11, 2023, and again on June 7, 2023 when OIG notified Meridian of contractual noncompliance and provided Meridian with an opportunity to cure its noncompliance. The OIG's Stand-Down Order confirmed that the Contractor should not take any action against any provider listed without the express written consent from the OIG. Meridian violated the Stand-Down Order and neglected the opportunity to cure its noncompliance on July 1, 2023 and July 16, 2023 when it issued recovery overpayment notices to a provider listed in the Stand-Down Order without written consent from the OIG.

In addition, the notices Meridian issued to the provider are in violation of Section 5.35.10., Prohibitions on Contractor Recoveries, of the Contract, specifically Section 5.35.10.1.2, which states that Contractor is prohibited from taking any actions to recover or withhold improper payments paid or due to a Network Provider, when the specific dates, issues, services, or claims upon which the recovery or withhold are based on, meet one or more of the following criteria:

5.35.10.1.2 When the issues, services, or claims that are the basis of the recovery or withhold are currently being investigated, audited, within the recovery process by the state, or are the subject of pending federal or state litigation or investigation;

Meridian's failure to comply with the Stand-Down Order impacted the OIG's program-integrity work, HHS-OIG's oversight role, and the work of state law enforcement by jeopardizing an ongoing criminal investigation. As such, the Department is sanctioning Meridian \$50,000. Meridian is to issue a check payable to the Department of Healthcare and Family Services for \$50,000 and shall submit that check to

the contact and address listed below no later than Friday, October 27, 2023. In the memo section of the check, please indicate "Meridian HCI Stand-Down Order Sanction".

Department of Healthcare and Family Services
Bureau of Fiscal Operations, Attn: Donavon Patton
2200 Churchill Road, Building A2
Springfield, IL 62702

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your HFS Account Manager, Keshonna Lones at Keshonna.Lones@illinois.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert Mendonsa, Deputy Administrator
Division of Medical Programs

cc: Daniel Rich, Ryan Litteken, Bob Miromonti, Amy Roberts, Dennise Parker, April OShea, Donavon Patton, Joseph Merwin, Laura Ray, Keshonna Lones, and Brenda Vilayhong