

700 Members Affected by Computer Programming Error

The [Health Plan of San Mateo \(HPSM\)](#), a local non-profit Health Coverage provider for approximately 95,000 County residents, sent approximately 700 approval notifications to the wrong members from April 1 to June 8, 2011.

The notifications were for certain medical procedures that require prior authorization (a service the Plan has to approve before it is provided). Once the Plan approves the service, it sends each member a notification letter, called an Authorization Approval. These notifications are considered Private Health Information (PHI).

Each HPSM Authorization Approval letter contains the member's name, address, service requested, and HPSM member ID number. An HPSM Authorization Approval letter does not contain the member's social security number.

HPSM discovered the Authorization Approval letter error on June 9, 2011 and immediately fixed the coding problem. HPSM also notified the appropriate state and federal agencies and alerted affected members.

At this time, HPSM does not have any information that unauthorized activity has taken place with the PHI of affected members, but it will monitor these accounts for suspicious activity, and follow up with members if needed.

If you are an HPSM member and have not received notification that your account was affected, then you are not one of the 700 members who were sent the wrong Authorization Approvals.

If you have questions about this incident, and would like to contact HPSM directly, please use the [Contact Us](#) link at the top of this page.

See HPSM's [Notice of Privacy Practices](#).

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The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a Federal law that protects health information. Health plans must follow this law to protect privacy rights. Any person with health coverage can exercise these rights, ask questions about them, and file a complaint if they believe their rights are being denied or their health information has not been protected. To file a complaint, contact your health coverage provider or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Office for Civil Rights at **1-800-368-1019**. TTY users can call **1-800-537-7697**.