



State of New Jersey

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER
MEDICAID FRAUD DIVISION
P.O. BOX 025
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0025
(609) 826-4700

PHILIP JAMES DEGNAN
State Comptroller

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

JOSH LICHTBLAU
Director

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Contact: Jeff Lamm
609-633-2377

Ocean County Doctor and His Medical Practice Temporarily Suspended From Medicaid Program

TRENTON - In a notice dated January 27, 2017, the Medicaid Fraud Division ("MFD") within the New Jersey Office of the State Comptroller temporarily suspended Ocean County physician Dr. Michael Bleiman from all Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs following allegations that the doctor improperly stored vaccines that were administered to children as part of the Vaccines for Children ("VFC") program. The VFC program is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of their family's inability to pay.

The temporary suspension was effective immediately and includes Dr. Bleiman's medical practice, Southern Ocean Pediatrics and Family Medicine, in Manahawkin. As a result of this action, both Dr. Bleiman and his medical practice are suspended from performing any services funded by Medicaid programs. Pursuant to state regulations, the suspension will remain in effect pending further investigation by the MFD and other state agencies, including the Department of Health ("DOH") and the Board of Medical Examiners ("BME").

"The MFD has the authority to suspend practitioners in order to protect the interests of the Medicaid program and its recipients," State Comptroller Philip James Degnan said. "The alleged actions in this matter presented adequate evidence that quality of care issues existed and we took immediate, appropriate action to temporarily suspend this practitioner from the Medicaid program," State Comptroller Degnan said.

The suspension follows an investigation conducted by the DOH, with further investigation and review by the MFD and the BME. On January 9, 2017, the Office of the Attorney General filed a Notice of Hearing and Complaint against Dr. Bleiman individually, alleging gross negligence, misrepresentation, professional misconduct and failure to comply with Board regulations, specifically his failure to maintain VFC vaccines in accordance with the standard pharmaceutical practice and manufacturer recommendations. MFD's action is based, in part, on the DOH's investigation, which determined that Dr. Bleiman and his practice violated VFC program requirements. These actions subjected VFC eligible patients, including Medicaid recipients, to potentially ineffective vaccines. The DOH has posted on its website a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for those members of the public who may be affected by this matter: http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp/documents/vfc_faqs.pdf.

MFD's suspension only affects Dr. Bleiman's participation in the Medicaid program. It does not prevent the doctor from practicing medicine generally. Additionally, Dr. Bleiman retains any and all rights afforded to him under state law with regard to the allegations against him.

MFD serves as the state's independent watchdog for New Jersey's various Medicaid programs and works to ensure that the state's Medicaid dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently. As part of its oversight role, MFD audits and investigates health care providers, managed care organizations and Medicaid recipients to identify and recover improperly expended Medicaid funds and identify and redress quality of care issues affecting the health of Medicaid recipients.

Suspected Medicaid waste, fraud or abuse can be reported to the MFD by calling its toll-free hotline at (888)937-2835 or by submitting a complaint form located at the following address: <http://www.state.nj.us/comptroller/divisions/medicaid/complaint.html>.

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