companies to compete with foreign-based companies in domestic and export markets.

Dated: December 2, 2005.

Michele M. Leonhart,

Deputy Administrator.

[FR Doc. E5–7110 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4410–09–P

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employee Benefits Security Administration

Publication of Year 2005 Form M–1 With Electronic Filing Option, Notice

AGENCY: Employee Benefits Security Administration, Department of Labor.

ACTION: Notice on the Availability of the Year 2005 Form M–1 with Electronic Filing Option.

SUMMARY: This document announces the availability of the Year 2005 Form M–1, Annual Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements and Certain Entities Claiming Exception. A copy of this new form is attached. It is substantively identical to the 2004 Form M–1. The Form M–1 may again be filed electronically over the Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For inquiries regarding the Form M–1 filing requirement, contact Amy J. Turner or Kevin Horahan, Office of Health Plan Standards and Compliance Assistance, at (202) 693–8335. For inquiries regarding how to obtain or file a Form M–1, see the *Supplementary Information* section below.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The Form M–1 is required to be filed under section 101(g) and section 734 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA), and 29 CFR 2520.101–2.

II. The Year 2005 Form M–1

This document announces the availability of the Year 2005 Form M–1, Annual Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and Certain Entities Claiming Exception (ECEs). A copy of the new form is attached.

This year's Form M–1 is substantively identical to the Year 2004 Form M–1. The electronic filing option has been retained and filers are encouraged to use this method. The Year 2005 Form M–1 is due March 1, 2006, with an extension until May 1, 2006 available.

The Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) is committed to working together with administrators to help them comply with this filing requirement. Additional copies of the Form M–1 are available on the Internet at *http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/forms_requests.html.* In addition, after printing, copies will be available by calling the EBSA toll-free publication hotline at 1–866–444–EBSA (3272). Questions on completing the form are being directed to the EBSA help desk at (202) 693–8360. For questions regarding the electronic filing capability, contact the EBSA computer help desk at (202) 693–8600.

Statutory Authority: 29 U.S.C. 1021–1024, 1027, 1029–31, 1059, 1132, 1134, 1135, 1181–1183, 1181 note, 1185, 1185a–b, 1191, 1191a–c; Secretary of Labor's Order No. 1–2003, 68 FR 5374 (February 2, 2003).

Signed at Washington, DC, December 1, 2005.

Ann L. Combs,

Assistant Secretary, Employee Benefits Security Administration.

2005

Form M-1 Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and Certain Entities Claiming Exception (ECEs)

Web-based filing available!

This package contains the following form and related instructions:

Form M-1
Instructions
Self-Compliance Tool

Enjoy these additional benefits not available for paper filings:

Greater Accuracy

- Electronic-filing data is checked for errors to improve accuracy
- Built-in error checks mean fewer corrections and faster processing of your return

Increased Security

- Encryption of submitted data assures a high level of security
- Assigned Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) and secure filing Web site provide protected and secure access
- Direct processing reduces the manual handling of your return

Automated

- Web site submission occurs immediately
- Eliminate postage expenses

Participation is easy!

- For information on Form M-1 electronic filing, please visit www.askebsa.dol.gov/mewa

Package Form M-1

If you have additional questions about the Form M-1 filing requirement or the ERISA health coverage requirements, there's help for you.

Form M-1 Filing Requirement

(1) For questions on completing the Form M-1, contact the Employee Benefits Security Administration's (EBSA's) Form M-1 help desk at **202-693-8360**.

(2) For inquiries regarding electronic filing capability, contact the EBSA computer help desk at **202-693-8600**.

(3) For inquiries regarding the Form M-1 filing requirement, contact the Office of Health Plan Standards and Compliance Assistance at **202-693-8335**.

ERISA Health Coverage Requirements

(1) For questions about ERISA's health coverage requirements, contact EBSA by calling toll-free **1-866-444-EBSA (3272)** or electronically at **www.askebsa.dol.gov**.

(2) EBSA's Health Benefits Education Campaign offers compliance assistance seminars across the country addressing a wide variety of health care issues, including HIPAA, COBRA, and the benefit claims procedure regulation. For information on upcoming compliance assistance seminars, go to **www.dol.gov/ebsa/hbec.html**.

The Department of Labor's EBSA has many helpful compliance assistance publications on ERISA's health benefit requirements, including:

- *MEWAs: Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements Under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act: A Guide to Federal and State Regulation*
- *Health Benefits Coverage Under Federal Law*
- *Your Rights After a Mastectomy . . . Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998*
- *An Employer's Guide to Group Health Continuation Coverage Under COBRA*

EBSA also has many publications to assist participants and beneficiaries. EBSA's publications are available on the Internet at **www.dol.gov/ebsa** or by calling toll-free **1-866-444-EBSA (3272)**.

2005 Form M-1

MEWA/ECE Form

This Form is Open to Public Inspection

Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and Certain Entities Claiming Exception (ECEs)

This report is required to be filed under section 101(g) of the Employee Retirements Income Security Act of 1974 and 29 CFR 2520.101-2.
→ See separate instructions before completing this form.

OMB No. 1210-0116

Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

PART I REPORT IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

Complete either Item **A** or Item **B** (as applicable) and Item **C**.

A If this is an annual report, specify whether it is for:
(1) ☐ The 2005 calendar year; or
(2) ☐ The fiscal year beginning _____ (mm/dd/yyyy) and ending _____ (mm/dd/yyyy).

B If this is a special filing, specify whether it is:
(1) ☐ A 90-day origination report;
(2) ☐ An amended report; or
(3) ☐ A request for an extension.

C If this is a final report, check here ..... → ☐

PART II MEWA OR ECE IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

1a Name and address of the MEWA or ECE	**1b** Telephone number of the MEWA or ECE
	1c Employer Identification Number (EIN)
	1d Plan Number (PN)
2a Name and address of the administrator of the MEWA or ECE	**2b** Telephone number of the administrator
	2c EIN
	2d E-Mail address of the administrator
3a Name and address of the entity sponsoring the MEWA or ECE	**3b** Telephone number of the sponsor
	3c EIN

PART III REGISTRATION INFORMATION

4 Specify the most recent date the MEWA or ECE was originated ..... → _____

5 Complete the following chart. (See Instructions for **Item 5**)

5a	5b	5c	5d	5e	5f	5g
Enter all States where the entity provides coverage.	Is the entity a licensed health insurance issuer in this State?	If you answer "yes" to **5b**, list any NAIC number.	If you answer "no" to **5b**, is the entity fully insured?	If you answer "yes" to **5d**, enter the name of the insurer and its NAIC number.	Does the entity purchase stop-loss coverage?	If you answer "yes" to **5f**, enter the name of the stop-loss insurer and its NAIC number.
	☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No		☐ Yes ☐ No	

6 Of the States identified in **Item 5a**, list those States in which the MEWA or ECE conducted 20 percent or more of its business (based on the number of participants receiving coverage for medical care under the MEWA or ECE).

7 Total number of participants covered under the MEWA or ECE ..... → _____

PART IV INFORMATION FOR COMPLIANCE WITH PART 7 OF ERISA

8a Has the MEWA or ECE been involved in any litigation or enforcement proceeding in which noncompliance with any provision of Part 7 of Subtitle B of Title I (Part 7) of ERISA was alleged? Answer for the year to which this filing applies and any time since then up to the date of completing this form. Answer "Yes" for any State or Federal litigation or enforcement proceeding (including any administrative proceeding), whether the allegation concerns a provision under Part 7 of ERISA, a corresponding provision under the Internal Revenue Code or Public Health Service Act, a breach of any duty under Title I of ERISA if the underlying violation relates to a requirement under Part 7 of ERISA, or a breach of a contractual obligation if the contract provision relates to a requirement under Part 7 of ERISA. (The instructions to this form contain additional information that may be helpful in answering this question.) ..... → ☐ Yes ☐ No

8b If you answered "Yes" to **Item 8a**, identify each litigation or enforcement proceeding. With respect to each, include (if applicable): (1) the case number, (2) the date, (3) the nature of the proceedings, (4) the court, (5) all parties (for example, plaintiffs and defendants or petitioners and respondents), and (6) the disposition. You may answer this question by attaching a copy of the complaint with the name of the MEWA or ECE, the disposition of the case, and the phrase "Item 8b Attachment," noted in the upper right corner.

9 Complete the following. (Note: The instructions to this form contain a Self-Compliance Tool which may be helpful in completing this item. Please read the instructions carefully before answering the following questions.)

9a	Is the health coverage provided by the MEWA or ECE in compliance with the portability provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and the Department of Labor's (Department's) regulations issued thereunder? (See Part I of the Self-Compliance Tool)	→ ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
9b	Is the coverage provided by the MEWA or ECE in compliance with the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 and the Department's regulations issued thereunder? (See Part II of the Self-Compliance Tool)	→ ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
9c	Is the coverage provided by the MEWA or ECE in compliance with the Newborns' and Mothers' Health Protection Act of 1996 and the Department's regulations issued thereunder? (See Part III of the Self-Compliance Tool)	→ ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
9d	Is the coverage provided by the MEWA or ECE in compliance with the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998? (See Part IV of the Self-Compliance Tool)	→ ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

IF MORE SPACE IS REQUIRED FOR ANY ITEM, YOU MAY ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS SECTION 2.4)

Caution: *Penalties may apply in the case of a late or incomplete filing of this report.*

Under penalty of perjury and other penalties set forth in the instructions, I declare that I have examined this report, including any accompanying attachments, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct. Under penalty of perjury and other penalties set forth in the instructions, I also declare that, unless this is an extension request, this report is complete.

Signature of administrator → _____ Date → _____

Type or print name of administrator → _____

Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

Year 2005
Instructions for Form M-1

Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and Certain Entities Claiming Exception (ECEs)

ERISA refers to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended

Notes on the 2005 Form M-1

- This year's Form M-1 is substantively identical to the 2004 Form M-1.
- The year 2005 Form M-1 is generally due March 1, 2006, with an extension until May 1, 2006 available.

Introduction

This form is required to be filed under sections 101(g) and 734 of ERISA and 29 CFR 2520.101-2.

The Department of Labor, EBSA, is committed to working together with administrators to help them comply with this filing requirement. Additional copies of the Form M-1 are available by calling the **EBSA toll-free hotline at 1-866-444-3272** and on the Internet at: **www.dol.gov/ebsa.** If you have any questions (such as whether you are required to file this report) or if you need any assistance in completing this report, please call the **EBSA Form M-1 help desk at (202) 693-8360.**

All Form M-1 reports are subject to a computerized review. It is in the filer's best interest that the responses accurately reflect the circumstances they were designed to report.

Contents

The instructions are divided into three main sections.

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SECTION 1

1.1 Definitions

"Administrator"
For purposes of this report, the "administrator" is the person specifically designated by the terms of the MEWA or ECE. However, if the MEWA or ECE is a group health plan and the administrator is not so designated, the "plan sponsor" is the administrator. ("Plan sponsor" is defined in ERISA section 3(16)(B) as (i) the employer in the case of an employee benefit plan established or maintained by a single employer, (ii) the employee organization in the case of a plan established or maintained by an employee organization, or (iii) in the case of a plan established or maintained by two or more employers or jointly by one or more employers and one or more employee organizations, the association, committee, joint board of trustees, or other similar group of representatives of the parties who establish or maintain the plan.) Moreover, in the case of a MEWA or ECE for which an administrator is not designated and a plan sponsor cannot be identified, the administrator is the person or persons actually responsible (whether or not so designated under the terms of the MEWA or ECE) for the control, disposition, or management of the cash or property received by or contributed to the MEWA or ECE, irrespective of whether such control, disposition, or management is exercised directly by such person or persons or indirectly through an agent, custodian, or trustee designated by such person or persons.

"Employer Identification Number" or "EIN"
An EIN is a nine-digit employer identification number (for example, 00-1234567) that has been assigned by the IRS. Entities who do not have an EIN should apply for one on Form SS-4, Application for Employer Identification Number as soon as possible. You can obtain Form SS-4 by calling **1-800-829-4933** or at the IRS Web site at **www.irs.gov**. EBSA does NOT issue EINs.

"Entity Claiming Exception" or "ECE"
For purposes of this report, the term "entity claiming exception" or "ECE" means any plan or other arrangement that is established or maintained for the purpose of offering or providing medical benefits to the employees of two or more employers (including one or more self-employed individuals), or to their beneficiaries, and that claims it is not a MEWA because the plan or other arrangement claims the exception relating to plans established or maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements (see section 3(40)(A)(i) of ERISA and 29 CFR 2510.3-40 of the Department's regulations.)

The administrator of an ECE must file this report each year for the first 3 years after the ECE is "originated." (Warning: An ECE may be "originated" more than once. Each time an ECE is "originated" more filings are triggered.)

"Employee Welfare Benefit Plan"
In general, an employee welfare benefit plan means any plan, fund, or program established or maintained by an employer or by an employee organization, or by both, to the extent such plan, fund, or program provides its participants or beneficiaries the benefits listed in section 3(1) of ERISA (including benefits for medical care).

"Excepted Benefits"
Part 7 of Subtitle B of Title I (Part 7) of ERISA does not apply to any group health plan or group health insurance issuer in relation to its provision of excepted benefits.

Certain benefits that are generally not health coverage are excepted in all circumstances. These benefits are: coverage only for accident (including accidental death and dismemberment), disability income insurance, liability insurance (including general liability insurance and automobile liability insurance), coverage issued as a supplement to liability insurance, workers' compensation or similar insurance, automobile medical payment insurance, credit-only insurance (for example, mortgage insurance), and coverage for on-site medical clinics.

Other benefits that generally are health coverage are excepted if certain conditions are met. Specifically, limited scope dental benefits, limited scope vision benefits, and long-term care benefits are excepted if they are provided under a separate policy, certificate, or contract of insurance, or are otherwise not an integral part of the group health plan. Benefits provided under a health flexible spending arrangement may also qualify as excepted benefits if certain requirements are met. For more information on limited excepted benefits, see the Department of Labor's regulations at 29 CFR 2590.732(c)(3).

In addition, noncoordinated benefits may be excepted benefits. The term "noncoordinated benefits" refers to coverage for a specified disease or illness (such as cancer-only coverage) or hospital indemnity or other fixed dollar indemnity insurance (such as insurance that pays $100/day for a hospital stay as its only insurance benefit), if three conditions are met. First, the benefits must be provided under a separate policy, certificate, or contract of insurance. Second, there can be no coordination between the provision of these benefits and an exclusion of benefits under a group health plan maintained by the same plan sponsor. Third, benefits must be paid without regard to whether benefits are provided with respect to the same event under a group health plan maintained by the same plan sponsor. For more information on these noncoordinated excepted benefits, see the Department of Labor's regulations at 29 CFR 2590.732(c)(4).

Finally, supplemental benefits may be excepted if certain conditions are met. Specifically, the benefits are excepted only if they are provided under a separate policy, certificate or contract of insurance, and the benefits are medicare supplemental (commonly known as "Medigap" or "MedSupp") policies, TRICARE supplements, or supplements to certain employer group health plans. Such supplemental coverage cannot duplicate primary coverage and must be specifically designed to fill gaps in primary coverage, coinsurance, or deductibles.

Note that retiree coverage under a group health plan that coordinates with Medicare may serve a supplemental function similar to that of a Medigap policy. However, such employer-provided retiree "wrap around" benefits are not excepted benefits (because they are expressly excluded from the definition of a Medicare supplemental policy in section 1882(g)(1) of the Social Security Act). For more information on supplemental excepted benefits, see the Department of Labor's regulations at 29 CFR 2590.732(c)(5).

"Group Health Plan"
In general, a group health plan means an employee welfare benefit plan to the extent that the plan provides benefits for medical care to employees (including both current and former employees) or their dependents (as defined under the terms of the plan) directly or through insurance, reimbursement, or otherwise. See ERISA section 733(a) and 29 CFR 2590.732(a).

"Health Insurance Issuer" or "Issuer"
The term "health insurance issuer" or "issuer" is defined, in pertinent part, in §2590.701-2 of the Department's regulations as "an insurance company, insurance service, or insurance organization (including an HMO) that is required to be licensed to engage in the business of insurance in a State and that is subject to State law which regulates insurance . . . . Such term does not include a group health plan."

"Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangement" or "MEWA"
In general, a multiple employer welfare arrangement (MEWA) is an employee welfare benefit plan or other arrangement that is established or maintained for the purpose of offering or providing medical benefits to the employees of two or more employers (including one or more self-employed individuals), or to their beneficiaries, except that the term does not include any such plan or other arrangement that is established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more agreements that the Secretary finds to be collective bargaining agreements, by a rural electric cooperative, or by a rural telephone cooperative association. See ERISA section 3(40) and 29 CFR 2510.3-40 of the Department's regulations. (Note: Many States regulate entities as MEWAs using their own State definition of the term. Whether or not an entity meets a State's definition of a MEWA for purposes of regulation under State law is a matter of State law.)

For more information on MEWAs, visit EBSA's Web site at **www.dol.gov/ebsa** or call the **EBSA toll-free hotline** at **1-866-444-3272** and ask for the booklet entitled, *MEWAs: Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements Under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act: A Guide to Federal and State Regulation.*

For information on State MEWA regulation, contact your State Insurance Department.

"Originated"
For purposes of this report, a MEWA or ECE is "originated" each time any of the following events occur:

(1) The MEWA or ECE first begins offering or providing coverage for medical care to the employees of two or more employers (including one or more self-employed individuals);

(2) The MEWA or ECE begins offering or providing such coverage after any merger of MEWAs or ECEs (unless all MEWAs or ECEs involved in the merger were last originated at least 3 years prior to the merger); or

(3) The number of employees to which the MEWA or ECE provides coverage for medical care is at least 50 percent greater than the number of such employees on the last day of the previous calendar year (unless such increase is due to a merger with another MEWA or ECE under which all MEWAs and ECEs that participate in the merger were last originated at least 3 years prior to the merger).

Therefore, a MEWA or ECE may be originated more than once.

"Plan Number" or "PN"
A PN is a three-digit number assigned to a plan or other entity by an employer or plan administrator. For plans or other entities providing welfare benefits, the first plan number should be number 501 and additional plans should be numbered consecutively. For MEWAs and ECEs that file a Form 5500 Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan (Form 5500), the same PN should be used for the Form M-1. (For more information on the Form 5500 you can access **www.efast.dol.gov** or call toll-free at **1-866-463-3278**.)

"Sponsor"
For purposes of this report, the "sponsor" means:

(1) If the MEWA or ECE is a group health plan, the sponsor is the "plan sponsor,' which is defined in ERISA section 3(16)(B) as (i) the employer in the case of an employee benefit plan established or maintained by a single employer, (ii) the employee organization in the case of a plan established or maintained by an employee organization, or (iii) in the case of a plan established or maintained by two or more employers or jointly by one or more employers and one or more employee organizations, the association, committee, joint board of trustees, or other similar group of representatives of the parties who establish or maintain the plan; or

(2) If the MEWA or ECE is not a group health plan, the sponsor is the entity that establishes or maintains the MEWA or ECE.

1.2 Who Must File

General Rules
The administrator of a MEWA generally must file this report for every calendar year, or portion thereof, that the MEWA offers or provides benefits for medical care to the employees of two or more employers (including one or more self-employed individuals). The administrator of an ECE must file the report if the ECE was last originated at any time within 3 years before the annual filing due date. (See the definition of "originated" in Section 1.1 and the discussion of When to File in Section 1.3.) **(Caution:** An ECE may be "originated" more than once. Each time an ECE is "originated:' more filings are triggered.)

Exceptions

(1) Irrespective of the general rules (described above), in no event is reporting required by the administrator of a MEWA or ECE if the MEWA or ECE meets any of the following conditions:

(i) It is licensed or authorized to operate as a health insurance issuer in every State in which it offers or provides coverage for medical care to employees.

(ii) It provides coverage that consists solely of excepted benefits (defined above), which are not subject to Part 7 of ERISA. (However, if the MEWA or ECE provides coverage that consists both of excepted benefits and other benefits for medical care that are not excepted benefits, the administrator of the MEWA or ECE is required to file the Form M-1.)

(iii) It is a group health plan that is not subject to ERISA, including a governmental plan, church plan, or plan maintained only for the purpose of complying with workers' compensation laws, within the meaning of sections 4(b)(1), 4(b)(2), or 4(b)(3) of ERISA, respectively.

(iv) It provides coverage only through group health plans that are not covered by ERISA, including governmental plans, church plans, and plans maintained only for the purpose of complying with workers' compensation laws, within the meaning of sections 4(b)(1), 4(b)(2), and 4(b)(3) of ERISA, respectively (or other arrangements not subject to ERISA, such as health insurance coverage offered to individuals other than in connection with a group health plan, known as individual market coverage).

(2) In addition, in no event is reporting required by the administrator of an entity that would not constitute a MEWA or ECE but for the following circumstances:

(i) It provides coverage to the employees of two or more trades or businesses that share a common control interest of at least 25 percent at any time during the plan year, applying principles similar to the principles applied under section 414 (b) or (c) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(ii) It provides coverage to the employees of two or more employers due to change in control of businesses (such as a merger or acquisition) that occurs for a purpose other than avoiding Form M-1 filing and is temporary in nature (*i.e.*, it does not extend beyond the end of the plan year following the plan year in which the change in control occurs).

(iii) It provides coverage to persons (excluding spouses and dependents) who are not employees or former employees of the plan sponsor, such as nonemployee members of the board of directors or independent contractors, and the number of such persons who are not employees or former employees does not exceed one percent of the total number of employees or former employees covered under the arrangement, determined as of the last day of the year to be reported or, in the case of a 90-day origination report, determined as of the 60th day following the origination date.

1.3 When to File

General Rule

The Form M-1 must be filed no later than March 1 following any calendar year for which a filing is required (unless March 1 is a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, in which case the form must be filed no later than the next business day).

90-Day Origination Report

In general, an expedited filing is also required after a MEWA or ECE is originated. To satisfy this requirement, the administrator must complete and file the Form M-1 within 90 days of the date the MEWA or ECE is originated (unless the last day of the 90-day period is a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, in which case the form must be filed no later than the next business day).

Exception to the 90-Day Origination Report Requirement

No 90-Day Origination Report is required if the entity was originated in October, November, or December.

Extensions

A one-time extension of time to file will automatically be granted if the administrator of the MEWA or ECE requests an extension. To request an extension, the administrator must: (1) complete Parts I and II of the Form M-1 (and check Box B(3) in Part I); (2) sign, date, and type or print the administrator's name at the end of the form; and (3) file this request for extension no later than the normal due date for the Form M-1. In such a case, the administrator will have an additional 60 days to file a completed Form M-1. A copy of this request for extension must be attached to the completed Form M-1 when filed.

1.4 How to File

The 2005 Form M-1 can be filed electronically with the Department of Labor by going to **www.askebsa.dol.gov/mewa**.

In addition, completed paper copies of the Form M-1 can be sent to:

Public Documents Room, EBSA
Room N-1513, U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20210

1.5 Penalties

ERISA provides for a civil penalty for failure to file a Form M-1, failure to file a completed Form M-1, and late filings. In the event of no filing, an incomplete filing, or a late filing, a penalty may apply of up to $1,100 a day for each day that the administrator of the MEWA or ECE fails or refuses to file a complete report (or a higher amount if adjusted pursuant to the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990, as amended by the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996). In addition, certain other penalties may apply.

SECTION 2

2.1 Year to be Reported

General Rule
The administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is required to file must complete the Form M-1 using the previous calendar year's information. (For example, for a filing due by March 1, 2006, calendar year 2005 information should be used.)

Fiscal Year Exception
The administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is required to file may report using fiscal year information if the administrator of the MEWA or ECE has at least 6 continuous months of fiscal year information to report. (Thus, for example, for a filing that is due by March 1, 2006, fiscal year 2005 information may be used if the administrator has at least 6 continuous months of fiscal year 2005 information to report.) In this case, the administrator should check Box A(2) in Part I and specify the fiscal year.

2.2 The 90-Day Origination Report

When a MEWA or ECE is originated, a 90-Day Origination Report is generally required. (See Section 1.3 on When to File). When filing a 90-Day Origination Report, the administrator is required to complete the Form M-1 using information based on at least 60 continuous days of operation by the MEWA or ECE.

Remember, there is an exception to the 90-Day Origination Report requirement. No 90-Day Origination Report is required if the entity was originated in October, November, or December.

2.3 Signature and Date

For paper filings, the administrator must sign and date the report. The signature must be original. The name of the individual who signed as the administrator must be typed or printed clearly on the line under the signature line.

If filing online, the administrator must safeguard the EBSA-assigned Personal Identification Number (PIN) and acknowledge the online certification that the online filer is the administrator authorized to submit the filing on behalf of the MEWA of ECE. This electronic acknowledgment will bind the administrator to the information submitted on the electronic filing in lieu of an original signature.

2.4 Attaching Additional Pages

For paper filings, if more space is needed to complete any item on the Form M-1, additional pages may be attached. Additional pages must be the same size as this form (8 1/2" X 11") and should include the name of the MEWA or ECE, the Item number, and the word "Attachment" in the upper right corner. In addition, the attachment for any item should be in a format similar to that item on the form.

If filing online, these additional pages may be uploaded online at the Web filing site.

2.5 Amended Report

For paper filings, to correct errors and/or omissions on a previously filed Form M-1, submit a completed Form M-1 with Part I, Box B(2) checked and an original signature. When filing an amended report on paper, answer all questions and circle the amended line numbers.

Online filers may file an amended report by selecting *New Filing* at the Web filing site and selecting Item B(2) "An amended report."

SECTION 3

Important: "Yes/No" questions must be marked "Yes" or "No," but not both. "N/A" is not an acceptable response unless expressly permitted in the instructions to that line.

3.1 Line-By-Line Instructions

Part I - Report Identification Information
Complete either Item A or Item B, as applicable.

Annual Reports: If this is an annual report, check either box A(1) or box A(2).

Box A(1): Check this box if calendar year information is being used to complete this report. (See Section 2.1 on Year to be Reported.)

Box A(2): Check this box if fiscal year information is being used to complete this report. Also specify the fiscal year. (For example, if fiscal year 2005 information is being used instead of calendar year 2005 information, specify the dates the fiscal year begins and ends.) (See Section 2.1 on Year to be Reported.)

Special Filings: If this is a special filing, check either box B(1), box B(2), or box B(3).

Box B(1): Check this box if the filing is a 90-Day Origination Report. (See Section 1.2 on Who Must File, Section 1.3 on When to File, and Section 2.2 on 90-Day Origination Reports.)

Box B(2): Check this box if the filing is an Amended Report. (See Section 2.5 on Amended Reports.)

Box B(3): Check this box if the administrator of the MEWA or ECE is requesting an extension. (See Section 1.3 on When to File.)

Final Reports: Check the box in Item C if the administrator does not intend to file a Form M-1 next year. For example, if this is the third filing following an origination for an ECE, or if a MEWA

has ceased operations, the administrator must check this box.

Part II - MEWA or ECE Identification Information

Items 1a through 1d: Enter the name, address, and telephone number of the MEWA or ECE, and any EIN and PN used by the MEWA or ECE in reporting to the Department of Labor or the Internal Revenue Service. If the MEWA or ECE does not have any EINs associated with it, leave Item 1c blank. If the MEWA or ECE does not have any PNs associated with it, leave Item 1d blank. In answering these questions, list only EINs and PNs used by the MEWA or ECE itself and not those used by group health plans or employers that purchase coverage through the MEWA or ECE. For more information on EINs or PNs, see Section 1.1 on Definitions.

Items 2a through 2d: Enter the name, address, telephone number and email address of the administrator of the MEWA or ECE, and the EIN used by the administrator in reporting to the Department of Labor or the Internal Revenue Service. For this purpose, use only an EIN associated with the administrator as a separate entity. Do not use any EIN associated with the MEWA or ECE itself. Inclusion of an email address allows the Department of Labor to contact the administrator in the event problems arise, particularly with an electronic filing. For more information on the definition of "administrator," and on EINs or PNs, see Section 1.1 on Definitions.

Items 3a through 3c: Enter the name, address, and telephone number of the entity sponsoring the MEWA or ECE, and any EIN used by the sponsor in reporting to the Department of Labor or the Internal Revenue Service. For this purpose, use only an EIN associated with the sponsor. Do not use any EIN associated with the MEWA or ECE itself. For more information on the definition of "sponsor," and on EINs or PNs, see Section 1.1 on Definitions. If there is no such entity, leave Item 3 blank and skip to Item 4.

Part III - Registration Information

Item 4: Enter the date the MEWA or ECE was most recently "originated" For this purpose, see the definition of "originated" in Section 1.1.

Item 5: Complete the chart. If the report is a 90-Day Origination Report, complete this item with information that is current as of the 60th day following the origination date. Otherwise, complete this item with information that is current as of the last day of the year to be reported. (See Section 2.1 on Year to be Reported.) When completing the chart, complete Item 5a first. Then for each row, complete Item 5b through Item 5g as it applies to the State listed in Item 5a.

Item 5a. Enter all States in which the MEWA or ECE provides benefits for medical coverage. For this purpose, list the State(s) where the employers (of the employees receiving coverage) are domiciled. In answering this question, a "State" includes any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Wake Island, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Enter one State per row.

Item 5b. For each State listed in Item 5a, specify whether the MEWA or ECE is licensed or otherwise authorized to operate as a health insurance issuer in the State listed in that row. (For a definition of the term "health insurance issuer," see Section 1.1.) For more information on whether an entity that is a licensed or registered MEWA in a State meets the definition of a health insurance issuer in that State, contact the State Insurance Department.

Item 5c. For each "yes" answer in Item 5b, enter the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) number.

Item 5d. For each "no" answer in Item 5b, specify whether the MEWA or ECE is fully insured through one or more health insurance issuers in each State.

Item 5e. For each "yes" answer in Item 5d, enter the name of the insurer and its NAIC number (if available). If there is more than one insurer, enter all insurers and their NAIC numbers (if available).

Item 5f. In each State listed in Item 5a, specify whether the MEWA or ECE has purchased any stop-loss coverage. For this purpose, stop-loss coverage includes any coverage defined by the State as stop-loss coverage. For this purpose, stop-loss coverage also includes any financial reimbursement instrument that is related to liability for the payment of health claims by the MEWA or ECE, including reinsurance and excess loss insurance.

Item 5g. For each "yes" answer in Item 5f, enter the name of the stop-loss insurer and its NAIC number (if available). If there is more than one stop-loss insurer, enter all stop-loss insurers and their NAIC numbers (if available).

Item 6: Of the States identified in Item 5a, identify all States in which the MEWA or ECE conducted 20 percent or more of its business (based on the number of participants receiving coverage for medical care under the MEWA or ECE).

For example, consider a MEWA that offers or provides coverage to the employees of six employers. Two employers are located in State X and 70 participants in the MEWA receive coverage through these two employers. Three employers are located in State Y and 30 participants in the MEWA receive coverage through these three employers. Finally, one employer is located in State Z and 200 participants in the MEWA receive coverage through this employer. In this example, the administrator of the MEWA should specify State X and State Z under Item 6 because the MEWA conducts 23 1/3 percent of its business in State X (70/300 = 23 1/3 percent) and 66 2/3 percent of its business in State Z (200/300 = 66 2/3 percent). However, the administrator should not specify State Y because the MEWA conducts only 10 percent of its business in State Y (30/300 = 10 percent).

If the report is a 90-Day Origination Report, complete this item with information that is current as of the 60th day following the origination date. Otherwise, complete this item with information that is current as of the last day of the year to be reported. (See Section 2.1 on Year to be Reported.)

Item 7: Identify the total number of participants covered under the MEWA or ECE. For more information on determining the number of participants, see the Department of Labor's regulations at 29 CFR 2510.3-3(d).

If the report is a 90-Day Origination Report, complete this item with information that is current as of the 60th day following the origination date. Otherwise, complete this item with information that is current as of the last day of the year to be reported. (See Section 2.1 on Year to be Reported.)

Part IV - Information for Compliance with Part 7 of ERISA

Background Information on Part 7 of ERISA: On August 21, 1996, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) was enacted. On September 26, 1996, both the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 (MHPA) and the Newborns' and Mothers' Health Protection Act of 1996 (Newborns' Act) were enacted. On October 21, 1998, the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 (WHCRA) was enacted. All of the foregoing laws amended Part 7 of Subtitle B of Title I (Part 7) of ERISA with new requirements for group health plans. With respect to most of these requirements, corresponding provisions are contained in Chapter 100 of Subtitle K of the Internal Revenue Code (Code) and Title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act (PHS Act). These provisions generally are substantively identical.

The Departments of Labor, the Treasury, and Health and Human Services first issued interim final regulations implementing HIPAA's portability, access, and renewability provisions on April 1, 1997 (published in the Federal Register on April 8, 1997, 62 FR 16893). Two clarifications of the HIPAA regulations were published in the Federal Register on December 29, 1997, at 62 FR 67687. Additional interim final regulations and proposed regulations on HIPAA's nondiscrimination provisions were published in the Federal Register on January 8, 2001, at 66 FR 1378. Final HIPAA portability regulations, as well as additional proposed regulations, were published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2004, at 69 FR 78720. Regulations implementing the MHPA provisions were published in the Federal Register on December 22, 1997, at 62 FR 66931. The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 extended the MHPA sunset date to December 31, 2005. See Pub. L. No. 108-311. Also, regulations implementing the substantive provisions of the Newborns' Act were published in the Federal Register on October 27, 1998, at 63 FR 57545. Moreover, the notice requirements with respect to group health plans that provide coverage for maternity or newborn infant coverage are described in the Department of Labor's summary plan description content regulations at 2520.102-3(u). Finally, the Department of Labor has published informal guidance on WHCRA in its publication, *Your Rights After a Mastectomy ... Women's Health & Cancer Rights Acts of 1998*. This publication is available on the Internet at: **www.dol.gov/ebsa** and from **EBSA's toll-free hotline at 1-866-444-3272**.

General Information Regarding the Applicability of Part 7: In general, the foregoing provisions apply to group health plans and health insurance issuers in connection with a group health plan.

Many MEWAs and ECEs are group health plans or health insurance issuers. However, even if a MEWA or ECE is neither a group health plan nor a health insurance issuer, if the MEWA or ECE offers or provides benefits for medical care through one or more group health plans, the coverage is required to comply with Part 7 of ERISA and the MEWA or ECE is required to complete Items 8a through 9d.

Relation to Other Laws: States may, under certain circumstances, impose stricter laws with respect to health insurance issuers. Generally, questions concerning State laws should be directed to that State's Insurance Department.

For More Information: EBSA's publication, *Health Benefits Coverage Under Federal Law* includes general descriptions of the four health care laws and frequently-asked questions. It also includes a self-compliance tool that can help to determine compliance with HIPAA, MHPA, the Newborns' Act, and WHCRA with compliance tips that relate to common mistakes. This publication also includes a chart summarizing the laws' notice requirements and provides model language that can be used to comply. You may obtain this publication, or speak to a benefits advisor about these laws, by calling the **EBSA toll-free hotline at 1-866-444-3272**. This publication is also available on the Internet at **www.dol.gov/ebsa**.

Items 8a and 8b: With respect to Item 8a, check "yes" or "no" as applicable. For this purpose, do not include any audit that does not result in acquired corrective action. If you answer "yes" under Item 8a, identify, in Item 8b, any such litigation or enforcement proceeding.

Item 9a: The HIPAA portability requirements added sections 701, 702, and 703 of ERISA.

General Applicability. In general, you must answer "yes" or "no" to this question if you are the administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is a group health plan or if you are providing benefits for medical care to employees through one or more group health plans.

Exceptions. You may answer "N/A" if either of the following paragraphs apply:

(1) The MEWA or ECE is a small health plan (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

(2) The MEWA or ECE offers coverage only to small group health plans (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

Self-Compliance Tool. For purposes of determining if a MEWA or ECE is in compliance with these provisions, Part I of the Self-Compliance Tool may be helpful.

Item 9b: MHPA added section 712 of ERISA.

General Applicability. In general, you must answer "yes" or "no" to this question if you are the administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is a group health plan or if you are providing benefits for medical care to employees through one or more group health plans.

Exceptions. You may answer "N/A" if any of the following paragraphs apply:

(1) The MEWA or ECE is a small group health plan (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

(2) The MEWA or ECE offers coverage only to small group health plans (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

(3) The MEWA or ECE does not provide both medical/surgical benefits and mental health benefits.

(4) The MEWA or ECE offers or provides coverage only to small employers (as described in the small employer exemption contained in section 712(c)(1) of ERISA and §2590.712(e) of the Department's regulations).

(5) The coverage has satisfied the requirements for the increased cost exemption (described in section 712(c)(2) of ERISA and §2590.712(f) of the Department's regulations).

Self-Compliance Tool. For purposes of determining if a MEWA or ECE is in compliance with these provisions, Part II of the Self-Compliance Tool may be helpful.

Item 9c: The Newborns' Act added section 711 of ERISA.

General Applicability. In general, you must answer "yes" or "no" to this question if you are the administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is a group health plan or if you are providing benefits for medical care to employees through one or more group health plans.

Exceptions. You may answer "N/A" if either of the following paragraphs apply:

(1) The MEWA or ECE does not provide benefits for hospital lengths of stay in connection with childbirth.

(2) The MEWA or ECE is subject to State law regulating such coverage, instead of the federal Newborns' Act requirements, in all States identified in Item 5a, in accordance with section 711(f) of ERISA and §2590.711(e) of the Department's regulations.

Self-Compliance Tool. For purposes of determining if a MEWA or ECE is in compliance with these provisions, Part III of the Self-Compliance Tool may be helpful.

Item 9d: WHCRA added section 713 of ERISA.

General Applicability. In general, you must answer "yes" or "no" to this question if you are the administrator of a MEWA or ECE that is a group health plan or if you are providing benefits for medical care to employees through one or more group health plans.

Exceptions. You may answer "N/A" if any of the following paragraphs apply:

(1) The MEWA or ECE is a small health plan (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

(2) The MEWA or ECE offers coverage only to small group health plans (as described in section 732(a) of ERISA and §2590.732(b) of the Department's regulations).

(3) The MEWA or ECE does not provide medical/surgical benefits with respect to a mastectomy.

Self-Compliance Tool. For purposes of determining if a MEWA or ECE is in compliance with these provisions, Part IV of the Self-Compliance Tool may be helpful.

3.2 Self-Compliance Tool

A Self-Compliance Tool, which may be used to help assess an entity's compliance with Part 7 of ERISA, is included on the following pages of these instructions. This tool may also be helpful in answering Items 9a through 9d of the Form M-1.

Paperwork Reduction Act Notice

We ask for the information on this form to carry out the law as specified in ERISA. You are required to give us the information. We need it to determine whether the MEWA or ECE is operating according to law. You are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a current, valid OMB control number.

The average time needed to complete and file the form is estimated below. These times will vary depending on individual circumstances.

Learning about the law or the form: 2 hrs.

Preparing the form: 50 min. - 1 hr. and 35 min.

Self-Compliance Tool for Part 7 of ERISA: HIPAA and Other Health Care-Related Provisions

INTRODUCTION

This checklist is useful for group health plans, plan sponsors, plan administrators, health insurance issuers, and other parties to determine whether a group health plan is in compliance with the provisions of Part 7 of ERISA.

The requirements described in this checklist generally apply to group health plans and group health insurance issuers. However, references in this checklist are generally limited to "group health plans" or "plans" for convenience.

Cumulative List of Checklist Questions for HIPAA and Other Health Care-Related Statutes Added to Part 7 of ERISA

I. Determining Compliance with the HIPAA Provisions in Part 7 of ERISA

If you answer "No" to any of the questions below, the group health plan is in violation of the HIPAA provisions in Part 7 of ERISA.

	YES	NO	N/A
SECTION A - Limits on Preexisting Condition Exclusions If the plan imposes a preexisting condition exclusion period, the plan must comply with this section. **Definition:** Generally, a preexisting condition exclusion is a limitation or exclusion of benefits relating to a condition based on the fact that the condition was present before the effective date of coverage under a group health plan or group health insurance coverage, whether or not any medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment was recommended or received before that day. *See ERISA* section *701(b)(1); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(1).* **Tip:** Some preexisting condition exclusions are clearly designated as such in the plan documents. Others are not. Check for *hidden* preexisting condition exclusion provisions. A hidden preexisting condition exclusion is not designated as a preexisting condition exclusion, but restricts benefits based on when a condition arose in relation to the effective date of coverage. ◆ **Example:** A plan excludes coverage for cosmetic surgery unless the surgery is required by reason of an accidental injury occurring after the effective date of coverage. This plan provision operates as a preexisting condition exclusion			

	YES	NO	N/A
because only people who were injured while covered under the plan receive benefits for treatment. People who were injured while they had no coverage (or while they had prior coverage) do not receive benefits for treatment. Accordingly, this plan provision limits benefits relating to a condition because the condition was present before the effective date of coverage, and is considered a preexisting condition exclusion. A plan imposing a preexisting condition exclusion is required to comply with all the rules described in this **SECTION A**. Therefore, if the plan is not mindful that a provision operates as a preexisting condition exclusion, there could be multiple violations of this **SECTION A**. **Tip:** To comply with HIPAA, a plan imposing a *hidden* preexisting condition exclusion can rewrite its plan provision so that it is not a preexisting condition exclusion (i.e., benefits are not limited based on whether the condition arose before an individual's effective date of coverage) or the plan must limit the preexisting condition exclusion to comply with the rules of this **SECTION A.** If the plan does not impose a preexisting condition exclusion period, including a *hidden* preexisting condition exclusion period, check "N/A" and skip to **SECTION B**			☐
Question 1 – Six-month look-back period **Does the plan comply with the 6-month look-back rule?** ..... ◆ A preexisting condition exclusion may apply only to conditions for which medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment was recommended or received during the 6-month period ending on an individual's "enrollment date." *See ERISA section 701(a)(1); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(2)(i).* **Definitions:** An individual's enrollment date is the earlier of - (1) the first day of coverage; or (2) the first day of any waiting period for coverage. (Waiting period means the period that must pass before an employee or dependent is eligible to enroll under the terms of the plan. If an employee or dependent enrolls as a late enrollee or special enrollee, any period before such enrollment date is not a waiting period.) Therefore, if the plan has a waiting period, the 6-month look-back period ends on the first day of the waiting period, not the first day of coverage. *See ERISA sections 701(b)(1) and (4); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(3).* **Tip:** If the plan has a waiting period for coverage, ensure that the 6-month look-back period is measured from the first day of the waiting period, not the first day of coverage.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 2 – Twelve/eighteen-month look-forward period **Does the plan comply with HIPAA's 12-month (or 18-month) look-forward rule?** ..... ◆ The maximum preexisting condition exclusion period is 12 months (18 months for late enrollees), measured from an individual's enrollment date. *See ERISA section 701(a)(2); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(2)(ii).* **Tip:** If the plan has a waiting period, the 12-month (or 18-month) look-forward period must begin on the first day of the waiting period, not the first day of coverage. Therefore, the preexisting condition exclusion period runs concurrently with the waiting period, rather than beginning after the waiting period ends.	☐	☐	
Question 3 – Offsetting the length of preexisting condition exclusions by creditable coverage **Does the plan offset the length of its preexisting condition exclusion by an individual's creditable coverage?** ..... ◆ The length of the plan's preexisting condition exclusion must be offset by the number of days of an individual's creditable coverage. However, days of coverage prior to a "significant break in coverage" are not required to be counted as creditable coverage. Under Federal law, a significant break in coverage is a period of 63 days or more without any health coverage. *See ERISA section 701(a)(3); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(2)(iii).* **Definition:** Creditable coverage means coverage of an individual under any of the following: ◆ A group health plan (including COBRA coverage), ◆ Health insurance coverage, ◆ Medicare, ◆ Medicaid, ◆ TRICARE, ◆ The Indian Health Service, ◆ A State health risk benefit pool, ◆ The Federal Employee Health Benefit Program, ◆ A public health plan, ◆ Peace Corps Act health benefits, or ◆ The State Children's Health Insurance Program. *See ERISA section 701(c); 29 CFR 2590.701-4(a)(1).*	☐	☐	
Question 4 – Preexisting condition exclusion on genetic information **Does the plan comply with HIPAA by not imposing a preexisting condition exclusion with respect to genetic information?** ..... ◆ Genetic information alone cannot be treated as a preexisting condition in the absence of a diagnosis of a condition related to such information. *See ERISA section 701(a)(1) and (b)(1); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(b)(6).*	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 5 – Preexisting condition exclusion on newborns **Does the plan comply with HIPAA by not imposing an impermissible preexisting condition exclusion on newborns?** ..... ◆ A plan generally may not impose a preexisting condition exclusion on a child who enrolls in creditable coverage within 30 days of birth. *See ERISA section 701(d)(1); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(b)(1).* **Tip:** Even if a child is not covered under the plan within 30 days of birth, the child still cannot be subject to a preexisting condition exclusion if he or she was enrolled in any creditable coverage within 30 days of birth and does not incur a subsequent 63-day break in coverage.	☐	☐	
Question 6 – Preexisting condition exclusion on children adopted or placed for adoption **Does the plan comply with HIPAA by not imposing an impermissible preexisting condition exclusion on adopted children or children placed for adoption?** ..... ◆ A plan generally may not impose a preexisting condition exclusion on a child who enrolls in creditable coverage within 30 days of adoption or placement for adoption. *See ERISA section 701(d)(2); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(b)(2).*	☐	☐	
Question 7 – Preexisting condition exclusion on pregnancy **Does the plan comply with HIPAA by not imposing a preexisting condition exclusion on pregnancy?** ..... ◆ A plan may not impose a preexisting condition exclusion relating to pregnancy. *See ERISA section 701(d)(3); 29 CFR 2590.701-3(b)(5).* **Tip:** A plan provision that denies benefits for pregnancy until 12 months after an individual generally becomes eligible for benefits under the plan is a preexisting condition exclusion and is prohibited. See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(a)(1)(ii) Example 5.	☐	☐	
Question 8 – General notices of preexisting condition exclusion **Does the plan provide adequate and timely general notices of preexisting condition exclusions?** ..... ◆ A group health plan may not impose a preexisting condition exclusion with respect to a participant or dependent before notifying the participant, in writing, of: ◇ The existence and terms of any preexisting condition exclusion under the plan. This includes the length of the plan's look-back period, the maximum preexisting condition exclusion period under the plan, and how the plan will reduce this maximum by creditable coverage.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
❖ A description of the rights of individuals to demonstrate creditable coverage (and any applicable waiting periods) through a certificate of creditable coverage or through other means. This must include: (1) a description of the right of the individual to request a certificate from a prior plan or issuer, if necessary; and (2) a statement that the current plan or issuer will assist in obtaining a certificate from any prior plan or issuer, if necessary. ❖ A person to contact (including an address or telephone number) for obtaining additional information or assistance regarding the preexisting condition exclusion. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(c)(2).* ◆ The general notice is required to be provided as part of any written application materials distributed for enrollment. If a plan does not distribute such materials, the notice must be provided by the earliest date following a request for enrollment that the plan, acting in a reasonable and prompt fashion, can provide the notice. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(c)(1).* **Tips:** Ensure that the general notice is both complete and timely. The plan can include its general notice of preexisting condition exclusion in the summary plan description (SPD) if the SPD is provided as part of the application materials. If not, this general notice must be provided separately to be timely. A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 77.			
Question 9 – Determination of creditable coverage **Does the plan comply with the requirements relating to determination of individuals' creditable coverageage** ..... ◆ If a plan receives creditable coverage information from an individual, the plan is required to make a determination regarding the amount of the individual's creditable coverage and the length of any preexisting condition exclusion that remains. This determination must be made within a reasonable time following the receipt of the creditable coverage information. Whether this determination is made within a reasonable time depends on all the relevant facts and circumstances, including whether the plan's application of a preexisting condition exclusion would prevent an individual from having access to urgent medical care. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(d)(1).* ◆ A plan may not impose any limit on the amount of time an individual has to present a certificate or other evidence of creditable coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(d)(2).*	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 10 -- Individual notices of preexisting condition exclusions **Does the plan provide adequate and timely individual notices of preexisting condition exclusion?** ..... ◆ After an individual has presented evidence of creditable coverage and after the plan has made a determination of creditable coverage *(See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(d))*, the plan must provide the individual a written notice of the length of preexisting condition exclusion that remains after offsetting for prior creditable coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(e).* ◆ **Exception:** A plan is not required to provide this notice if the plan's preexisting condition exclusion is completely offset by the individual's prior creditable coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(e).* ◆ The notice must disclose: ❖ The determination of the length of any preexisting condition exclusion that applies to the individual (including the last day on which the preexisting condition exclusion applies); ❖ The basis for the determination, including the source and substance of any information on which the plan relied; ❖ An explanation of the individual's right to submit additional evidence of creditable coverage; and ❖ A description of any applicable appeal procedures established by the plan. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(e)(2).* ◆ The individual notice must be provided by the earliest date following a determination that the plan, acting in a reasonable and prompt fashion, can provide the notice. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(e)(1).* **Tips:** Ensure that individual notices are complete and timely as well. A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 79.	☐	☐	
Question 11 -- Reconsideration **If the plan determines that an individual does not have the creditable coverage claimed, and the plan wants to modify an initial determination of creditable coverage, does the plan comply with the rules relating to reconsideration?** ..... ◆ A plan may modify an initial determination of an individual's creditable coverage if the plan determines that the individual did not have the claimed creditable coverage, provided that: ❖ A notice of the new determination is provided to the individual; and ❖ Until the new notice is provided, the plan, for purposes of approving access to medical services, acts in a manner consistent with the initial determination of creditable coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-3(f).*	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
SECTION B - Compliance with the Certificate of Creditable Coverage Provisions Regardless of whether the plan imposes a preexisting condition exclusion, the plan is required to issue certificates of creditable coverage when coverage ceases and upon request. To be complete, under 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(3)(ii), each certificate must include: 1. Date issued; 2. Name of plan; 3. The individual's name and identification information (**Note: Dependent information can be included on the same certificate with the participant information or on a separate certificate. The plan is required to have used reasonable efforts to get dependent information. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(5)(i));* 4. Plan administrator name, address, and telephone number; 5. Telephone number for further information (if different); 6. Individual's creditable coverage information: ❖ Either: (1) that the individual has at least 18 months of creditable coverage; or (2) the date any waiting period (or affiliation period) began and the date creditable coverage began. ❖ Also, either: (1) the date creditable coverage ended; or (2) that creditable coverage is continuing. ❖ Automatic certificates of creditable coverage should reflect the last period of continuous coverage. Requested certificates of creditable coverage should reflect periods of continuous coverage that an individual had in the 24 months prior to the date of the request (up to 18 months of creditable coverage). *See 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(3)(iii).* ❖ Requested certificates should reflect periods of continuous coverage that an individual had in the 24 months prior to the date of the request (up to 18 months of creditable coverage). *See 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(3)(iii).* 7. An educational statement regarding HIPAA, which explains: ❖ The restrictions on the ability of a plan or issuer to impose a preexisting condition exclusion (including an individual's ability to reduce a preexisting condition exclusion by creditable coverage); ❖ Special enrollment rights; ❖ The prohibitions against discrimination based on any health factor; ❖ The right to individual health coverage; ❖ The fact that State law may require issuers to provide additional protections to individuals in that State; and ❖ Where to get more information. **Tips:** Remember to include information about waiting periods and dependents. If a plan imposes a waiting period, the date the waiting period began is required to be reflected on the certificate. In addition, if the certificate applies to more than one person (such as a participant and dependents), the dependents' creditable coverage information is required to be reflected on the certificate (or the plan can issue a separate certificate to each dependent). (**Note: If a dependent's last known address is different from the participant's last known address, a separate certificate is required to be provided to the dependent at the dependent's last known address.) A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 73.			

	YES	NO	N/A
** **Special Accountability Rule for Insured Plans:** ◆ Under a special accountability rule in ERISA section 701(e)(1)(C) and 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(1)(iii), a health insurance issuer, rather than the plan, may be responsible for providing certificates of creditable coverage by virtue of an agreement between the two that makes the issuer responsible. In this case, the issuer, but not the plan, violates the certificate requirements of section 701(e) if a certificate is not provided in compliance with these rules. (**Note: An agreement with a third-party administrator (TPA) that is not insuring benefits will not transfer responsibility from the plan.) ◆ Despite this special accountability rule, other responsibilities, such as a plan administrator's duty to monitor compliance with a contract, remain unaffected. Accordingly, this section of the checklist is organized differently to take into account this special accountability rule.			
Question 12 – Automatic certificates of creditable coverage upon loss of coverage **Does the plan provide complete and timely certificates of creditable coverage to individuals automatically upon loss of coverage?** ..... ◆ Plans are required to provide each participant and dependent covered under the plan an automatic certificate, free of charge, when coverage ceases. (If the plan is insured and there is an agreement with the issuer that the issuer is responsible for providing the certificates, check "N/A" and go to **Question 13.**) ◆ Under 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(2)(ii), plans and issuers must furnish an automatic certificate of creditable coverage: ❖ To an individual who is entitled to elect COBRA, at a time no later than when a notice is required to be provided for a qualifying event under COBRA (usually not more than 44 days); ❖ To an individual who loses coverage under the plan and who is not entitled to elect COBRA, within a reasonable time after coverage ceases; and ❖ To an individual who ceases COBRA, within a reasonable time after COBRA coverage ceases (or after the expiration of any grace period for nonpayment of premiums).	☐	☐	☐
Question 13 – Automatic certificate upon loss of coverage – *Issuer Responsibility* **If there is an agreement between the plan and the issuer stating that the issuer is responsible for providing certificates of creditable coverage, does the issuer provide complete and timely certificates?** ..... ◆ Even if the plan is not responsible for issuing certificates of creditable coverage, the plan should monitor issuer compliance with the certification provisions. ◆ If the plan is self-insured, or if there is no such agreement between the plan and the issuer, check "N/A" and skip to **Question 14.**	☐	☐	☐

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 14 – Certificates of creditable coverage upon request **Does the plan provide complete certificates of creditable coverage upon request?** ..... (If the plan is insured and the issuer is responsible for issuing certificates pursuant to an agreement, check "N/A" and go to **Question 15.**) ◆ Certificates of creditable coverage must be provided free of charge to individuals who request a certificate while covered under the plan and for up to 24 months after coverage ends. *See ERISA section 701(e)(1)(A); 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(2)(iii).* ◆ Requested certificates must be provided, at the earliest time that a plan or issuer, acting in a reasonable and prompt fashion, can provide the certificate of creditable coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(2)(iii).*	☐	☐	☐
Question 15 – Certificates upon request – Issuer Responsibility **If the plan is insured and there is an agreement between the plan and the issuer stating that the issuer is responsible for providing certificates of creditable coverage, does the issuer provide complete certificates?** ..... ◆ Even if the plan is not responsible for issuing certificates of creditable coverage, the plan should monitor issuer compliance with the certification provisions. ◆ If the plan is self-insured, or if there is no such agreement between the plan and the issuer, check "N/A" and skip to **Question 16.**	☐	☐	☐
Question 16 – Written Procedure for Requesting Certificates **Does the plan have a written procedure for individuals to request and receive certificates of creditable coverage?** ..... ◆ The plan must have a written procedure for individuals to request and receive certificates of creditable coverage. The written procedure must include all contact information necessary to request a certificate (such as name and phone number or address). *See 29 CFR 2590.701-5(a)(4)(ii).*	☐	☐	☐
SECTION C – Compliance with the Special Enrollment Provisions Group health plans must allow individuals (who are otherwise eligible) to enroll upon certain specified events, regardless of any late enrollment provisions, if enrollment is requested within 30 days of the event. The plan must provide for special enrollment, as follows:			

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 17 – Special enrollment upon loss of other coverage **Does the plan provide full special enrollment rights upon loss of other coverage?** ..... ◆ A plan must permit loss-of-coverage special enrollment upon: (1) loss of eligibility for group health plan coverage or health insurance coverage; and (2) termination of employer contributions toward group health plan coverage. *See ERISA section 701(f)(1); 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)* ◆ When a current employee loses eligibility for coverage, the plan must permit the employee and any dependents to special enroll. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(2)(i).* ◆ When a dependent of a current employee loses eligibility for coverage, the plan must permit the dependent and the employee to special enroll. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(2)(ii).* **Examples:** Examples of reasons for loss of eligibility include: legal separation, divorce, death of an employee, termination or reduction in the number of hours of employment - voluntary or involuntary (with or without electing COBRA), exhaustion of COBRA, reduction in hours, "aging out" under other parent's coverage, moving out of an HMO's service area, and meeting or exceeding a lifetime limit on all benefits. Loss of eligibility for coverage does not include loss due to the individual's failure to pay premiums or termination of coverage for cause - such as for fraud. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(3)(i).* ◆ When employer contributions toward an employee's or dependent's coverage terminates, the plan must permit special enrollment, even if the employee or dependent did not lose eligibility for coverage. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(3)(ii).* ◆ Plans must allow an employee a period of at least 30 days to request enrollment. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(4)(i).* ◆ Coverage must become effective no later than the first day of the first month following a completed request for enrollment. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(a)(4)(ii).* **Tip**: Ensure that the plan permits special enrollment upon all of the loss of coverage events described above.	☐	☐	
Question 18 – Dependent special enrollment **Does the plan provide full special enrollment rights to individuals upon marriage, birth, adoption, and placement for adoption?** ..... ◆ Plans must generally permit current employees to enroll upon marriage and upon birth, adoption, or placement for adoption of a dependent child. *See ERISA section 701(f)(2); 29 CFR 2590.701-6(b)(2).* ◆ Plans must generally permit a participant's spouse **and** new dependents to enroll upon marriage, birth, adoption, and placement for adoption. *See ERISA section 701(f)(2); 29 CFR 2590.701-6(b)(2).*	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
◆ Plans must allow an individual a period of at least 30 days to request enrollment. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(b)(3)(i).* ◆ In the case of marriage, coverage must become effective no later than the first day of the month following a completed request for enrollment. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(b)(3)(iii)(A).* ◆ In the case of birth, adoption, or placement for adoption, coverage must become effective as of the date of the birth, adoption, or placement for adoption. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(b)(3)(iii)(B).* **Tips:** Remember to allow all eligible employees, spouses, and new dependents to enroll upon these events. Also, ensure that the effective date of coverage complies with HIPAA, keeping in mind that some effective dates of coverage are retroactive.			
Question 19 – Treatment of special enrollees **Does the plan treat special enrollees the same as individuals who enroll when first eligible, for purposes of eligibility for benefit packages, premiums, and imposing a preexisting condition exclusion?** ..... ◆ If an individual requests enrollment while the individual is entitled to special enrollment, the individual is a special enrollee, even if the request for enrollment coincides with a late enrollment opportunity under the plan. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(d)(1).* ◆ Special enrollees must be offered the same benefit packages available to similarly situated individuals who enroll when first eligible. (Any difference in benefits or cost-sharing requirements for different individuals constitutes a different benefit package.) In addition, a special enrollee cannot be required to pay more for coverage than a similarly situated individual who enrolls in the same coverage when first eligible. The length of any preexisting condition exclusion that may be applied cannot exceed that applied to other similarly situated individuals who enroll when first eligible. *See 29 CFR 2590.701-6(d)(2).*	☐	☐	
Question 20 – Notice of special enrollment rights **Does the plan provide timely and adequate notices of special enrollment rights?** ..... ◆ On or before the time an employee is offered the opportunity to enroll in the plan, the plan must provide the employee with a description of special enrollment rights. **Tip:** Ensure that the special enrollment notice is provided at or before the time an employee is initially offered the opportunity to enroll in the plan. This may mean breaking it off from the SPD. The plan can include its special enrollment notice in the SPD if the SPD is provided at or before the initial enrollment opportunity (for example, as part of the application materials). If not, the special enrollment notice must be provided separately to be timely.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
SECTION D – Compliance with the HIPAA Nondiscrimination Provisions Overview. HIPAA prohibits group health plans and health insurance issuers from discriminating against individuals in eligibility and continued eligibility for benefits and in individual premium or contribution rates based on health factors. These health factors include: health status, medical condition (including both physical and mental illnesses), claims experience, receipt of health care, medical history, genetic information, evidence of insurability (including conditions arising out of acts of domestic violence and participation in activities such as motorcycling, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, skiing, and other similar activities), and disability. *See ERISA section 702; 29 CFR 2590.702.* Similarly Situated Individuals. It is important to recognize that the nondiscrimination rules prohibit discrimination within a group of similarly situated individuals. Under 29 CFR 2590.702(d), plans may treat distinct groups of similarly situated individuals differently, if the distinctions between or among the groups are not based on a health factor. If distinguishing among groups of participants, plans and issuers must base distinctions on bona fide employment-based classifications consistent with the employer's usual business practice. Whether an employment-based classification is bona fide is based on relevant facts and circumstances, such as whether the employer uses the classification for purposes independent of qualification for health coverage. Bona fide employment-based classifications might include: full-time versus part-time employee status; different geographic location; membership in a collective bargaining unit; date of hire or length of service; or differing occupations. In addition, plans may treat participants and beneficiaries as two separate groups of similarly situated individuals. Plans may also distinguish among beneficiaries. Distinctions among groups of beneficiaries may be based on bona fide employment-based classifications of the participant through whom the beneficiary is receiving coverage, relationship to the participant (such as spouse or dependent), marital status, age or student status of dependent children, or any other factor that is not a health factor. **Exception for benign discrimination:** The nondiscrimination rules do not prohibit a plan from establishing more favorable rules for eligibility or premium rates for individuals with an adverse health factor, such as a disability. *See 29 CFR 2590.702(g).* Check to see that the plan complies with HIPAA's nondiscrimination provisions as follows:			
Question 21 – Nondiscrimination in eligibility **Does the plan allow individuals eligibility and continued eligibility under the plan regardless of any adverse health factor?** ..... ◆ Examples of plan provisions that violate ERISA section 702(a) because they discriminate in eligibility based on a health factor include: ❖ Plan provisions that require "evidence of insurability," such as passing a physical exam, providing a certification of good health, or demonstrating good health through answers to a health care questionnaire in order to enroll. *See 29 CFR 2590.702(b)(1).*	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
◆ Also, note that it may be permissible for plans to require individuals to complete physical exams or health care questionnaires for purposes other than for determining eligibility to enroll in the plan, such as for determining an appropriate blended, aggregate group rate for providing coverage to the plan as a whole. *See 29 CFR 2590.702(b)(1)(iii) Example 1.* **Tip:** Eliminate plan provisions that deny individuals eligibility or continued eligibility under the plan based on a health factor, even if such provisions apply only to late enrollees.			
Question 22 – Nondiscrimination in benefits **Does the plan uniformly provide benefits to participants and beneficiaries, without directing any benefit restrictions at individual participants and beneficiaries based on a health factor?** ..... ◆ A plan is not required to provide any benefits, but benefits provided must be uniformly available and any benefit restrictions must be applied uniformly to all similarly situated individuals and cannot be directed at any individual participants or beneficiaries based on a health factor. If benefit exclusions or limitations are applied only to certain individuals based on a health factor, this would violate ERISA section 702(a) and 29 CFR 2590.702(b)(2). ◆ Examples of plan provisions that would be permissible under ERISA section 702(a) include: ❖ A lifetime or annual limit on all benefits, ❖ A lifetime or annual limit on the treatment of a particular condition, ❖ Limits or exclusions for certain types of treatments or drugs, ❖ Limitations based on medical necessity or experimental treatment, and ❖ Cost-sharing, if the limit applies uniformly to all similarly situated individuals and is not directed at individual participants or beneficiaries based on a health factor. ◆ A plan amendment applicable to all similarly situated individuals and made effective no earlier than the first day of the next plan year is not considered directed at individual participants and beneficiaries. *See 29 CFR 2590.702(b)(2)(i)(C).*	☐	☐	
Question 23 – Source-of-injury restrictions **If the plan imposes a source-of-injury restriction, does it comply with the HIPAA nondiscrimination provisions?** ..... ◆ Plans may exclude benefits for the treatment of certain injuries based on the source of that injury, except that plans may not exclude benefits otherwise provided for treatment of an injury if the injury results from an act of domestic violence or a medical condition. *See 29 CFR 2590.702(b)(2)(iii).* An example of a permissible source-of-injury exclusion would include:	☐	☐	☐

	YES	NO	N/A
❖ A plan provision that provides benefits for head injuries generally, but excludes benefits for head injuries sustained while participating in bungee jumping, as long as the injuries do not result from a medical condition or domestic violence. ◆ An impermissible source-of-injury exclusion would include: ❖ A plan provision that generally provides coverage for medical and surgical benefits, including hospital stays that are medically necessary, but excludes benefits for self-inflicted injuries or attempted suicide. This is impermissible because the plan provision excludes benefits for treatment of injuries that may result from a medical condition (depression). ◆ If the plan does not impose a source-of-injury restriction, check "N/A" and skip to **Question 24.**			
Question 24 – Nondiscrimination in premiums or contributions **Does the plan comply with HIPAA's nondiscrimination rules regarding individual premium or contribution rates?** ..... ◆ Under ERISA section 702(b) and 29 CFR 2590.702(c), plans may not require an individual to pay a premium or contribution that is greater than a premium or contribution for a similarly situated individual enrolled in the plan on the basis of any health factor. For example, it would be impermissible for a plan to require certain full-time employees to pay a higher premium than other full-time employees based on their prior claims experience. ◆ Nonetheless, the nondiscrimination rules do not prohibit a plan from providing a reward based on adherence to a wellness program. *See ERISA section 702(b)(2)(B); 29 CFR 2590.702(c)(3).* Proposed rules for wellness programs were published on January 8, 2001, at 66 FR 1421. Essentially, these proposed rules permit rewards that are not contingent on an individual meeting a standard related to a health factor. In addition, these proposed rules permit rewards that are contingent on an individual meeting a standard related to a health factor if: ❖ The reward does not exceed a specified percentage of the total employee-only premium. (Comments were invited as to whether a 10, 15, or 20 percent limitation might be appropriate.) ❖ The program is reasonably designed to promote good health or prevent disease. (For this purpose, a program must allow individuals an opportunity to qualify for the reward at least once each year.) ❖ The reward is available to all similarly situated individuals. In particular, the program must allow a reasonable alternative standard for individuals for whom it is unreasonably difficult due to a medical condition to satisfy the original program standard or for whom it is medically inadvisable to attempt to satisfy the original program standard during that time period. ❖ The plan must also disclose the availability of a reasonable alternative standard in all plan materials describing the terms of the program.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 25 – List billing **Is there compliance with the list billing provisions?** ..... ◆ Under 29 CFR 2590.702(c)(2)(ii), plans and issuers may not charge or quote an employer a different premium for an individual in a group of similarly situated individuals based on a health factor. This practice is commonly referred to as list billing. If an issuer is list billing an employer and the plan is passing the separate and different rates on to the individual participants and beneficiaries, both the plan and the issuer are violating the prohibition against discrimination in premium rates. This does not prevent plans and issuers from taking the health factors of each individual into account in establishing a blended/aggregate rate for providing coverage to the plan.	☐	☐	
Question 26 – Nonconfinement clauses **Is the plan free of any nonconfinement clauses?** ..... ◆ Typically, a nonconfinement clause will deny or delay eligibility for some or all benefits if an individual is confined to a hospital or other health care institution. Sometimes nonconfinement clauses also deny or delay eligibility if an individual cannot perform ordinary life activities. Often a nonconfinement clause is imposed only with respect to dependents, but they may also be imposed with respect to employees. 29 CFR 2590.702(e)(1) explains that these nonconfinement clauses violate ERISA sections 702(a) (if the clause delays or denies eligibility) and 702(b) (if the clause raises individual premiums). **Tip:** Delete all nonconfinement clauses.	☐	☐	
Question 27 – Actively-at-work clauses **Is the plan free of any impermissible actively-at-work clauses?** ..... ◆ Typically, actively-at-work provisions delay eligibility for benefits based on an individual being absent from work. 29 CFR 2590.702(e)(2) explains that actively-at-work provisions generally violate ERISA sections 702(a) (if the clause delays or denies eligibility) and 702(b) (if the clause raises individual premiums or contributions), unless absence from work due to a health factor is treated, for purposes of the plan, as if the individual is at work. Nonetheless, an exception provides that a plan may establish a rule for eligibility that requires an individual to begin work for the employer sponsoring the plan before eligibility commences. Further, plans may establish rules for eligibility or set any individual's premium or contribution rate in accordance with the rules relating to similarly situated individuals in 29 CFR 2590.702(d). For example, a plan that treats full-time and part-time employees differently for other employment-based purposes, such as eligibility for other employee benefits, may distinguish in rules for eligibility under the plan between full-time and part-time employees. **Tip:** Carefully examine any actively-at-work provision to ensure consistency with HIPAA.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
SECTION E – Compliance with the HMO Affiliation Period Provisions If the plan provides benefits through an HMO and imposes an HMO affiliation period in lieu of a preexisting condition exclusion period, answer **Question 28.** If the plan does not provide benefits through an HMO, or if there is no HMO affiliation period, check "N/A" and go to **Section F.**			☐
Question 28 – HMO affiliation period provisions **Does the plan comply with the limits on HMO affiliation periods?** ..... ◆ An affiliation period is a period of time that must expire before health insurance coverage provided by an HMO becomes effective and during which the HMO is not required to provide benefits. ◆ A group health plan offering coverage through an HMO may impose an affiliation period only if: ❖ No preexisting condition exclusion is imposed; ❖ No premium is charged to a participant or beneficiary for the affiliation period; ❖ The affiliation period is applied uniformly without regard to any health factor; ❖ The affiliation period does not exceed 2 months (or 3 months for late enrollees); ❖ The affiliation period begins on an individual's "enrollment date"; and ❖ The affiliation period runs concurrently with any waiting period. *See ERISA section 701(g); 29 CFR 2590.701-7.*	☐	☐	
SECTION F – Compliance with the MEWA or Multiemployer Plan Guaranteed Renewability Provisions If the plan is a multiple employer welfare arrangement (MEWA) or a multiemployer plan, it is required to provide guaranteed renewability of coverage in accordance with ERISA section 703. If the plan is a MEWA or multiemployer plan, it must comply with **Question 29.** If the plan is not a MEWA or multiemployer plan, check "N/A" and go to **Part II** of this check list.			☐
Question 29 – Multiemployer plan and MEWA guaranteed renewability **If the plan is a multiemployer plan, or a MEWA, does the plan provide guaranteed renewability?** ..... ◆ Group health plans that are multiemployer plans or MEWAs may not deny an employer continued access to the same or different coverage, other than: ❖ For nonpayment of contributions; ❖ For fraud or other intentional misrepresentation by the employer; ❖ For noncompliance with material plan provisions; ❖ Because the plan is ceasing to offer coverage in a geographic area;	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
❖ In the case of a plan that offers benefits through a network plan, there is no longer any individual enrolled through the employer who lives, resides, or works in the service area of the network plan and the plan applies this paragraph uniformly without regard to the claims experience of employers or any health-related factor in relation to such individuals or dependents; or ❖ For failure to meet the terms of an applicable collective bargaining agreement, to renew a collective bargaining or other agreement requiring or authorizing contributions to the plan, or to employ employees covered by such agreement. *See ERISA section 703.* **Note: The Public Health Service (PHS) Act contains different guaranteed renewability requirements for issuers. For more information, see PHS Act section 2712.			

II. Determining Compliance with the MHPA Provisions in Part 7 of ERISA			
If you answer "No" to any of the questions below, the group health plan is in violation of the MHPA provisions in Part 7 of ERISA.			
	YES	**NO**	**N/A**
If the plan provides both mental health and medical and surgical benefits, the plan may be subject to MHPA. If this is the case, answer **Questions 30-34**. If the plan does not provide mental health benefits, check "N/A" here and skip to **Part III** of this checklist. Also, the plan may be exempt from MHPA under the small employer (50 employees or fewer) exception or the increased cost exception. (To be eligible for the increased cost exception, the plan must have filed a notice with EBSA and notified participants and beneficiaries.) If the plan is exempt, check "N/A" here and skip to **Part III** of this checklist			☐
Question 30 – Lifetime dollar limit **Does the plan comply with MHPA's rules for lifetime dollar limits on mental health benefits (excluding constructive dollar limits)?** ..... ◆ A plan may not impose a lifetime dollar limit on mental health benefits that is lower than the lifetime dollar limit imposed on medical and surgical benefits. *See ERISA section 712; 29 CFR 2590.712.* (Only limits on what the plan is willing to pay are taken into account. A plan may impose annual dollar out-of-pocket limits on participants and beneficiaries without implicating MHPA.) ** Note: Limits on out-of-network mental health benefits may be lower than limits on medical and surgical benefits if limits on in-network mental health benefits are unlimited, or in parity with medical and surgical limits. *See 29 CFR 2590.712(b)(4), Example 3.* But, limits on inpatient and outpatient mental health benefits must separately be in parity with limits on medical and surgical benefits. *See 29 CFR 2590.712(b)(4), Example 2.*	☐	☐	
Question 31 – Constructive lifetime dollar limit **If the plan imposes a "constructive lifetime dollar limit" on mental health benefits (see explanation and examples below), is the limit *greater than or equal* to that imposed on medical and surgical benefits?** ..... ◆ A lifetime visit limit that is coupled with a maximum dollar amount payable by the plan per visit is, in effect, a lifetime dollar limit. This is referred to as a constructive lifetime dollar limit. ◆ For example, a 100-visit lifetime limit on mental health benefits that is payable to a maximum of $40 per visit is a constructive lifetime dollar limit of $4,000 on mental health benefits. If this limit is less than the limit for medical and surgical benefits (or if there is no limit for medical and surgical benefits), the plan is not in compliance with MHPA. ◆ Again, remember only limits on what the plan is willing to pay are taken into account. **Tip:** The plan should eliminate any constructive dollar limit on mental health benefits that is lower than that for medical and surgical benefits. The plan can still impose visit limits under MHPA, provided they are not coupled with absolute dollar limitations, which would constitute a constructive dollar limit.	☐	☐	☐

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 32 – Annual dollar limit **Does the plan comply with MHPA's rules for annual dollar limits on mental health benefits (excluding constructive dollar limits)?** ..... ◆ A plan may not impose an annual dollar limit on mental health benefits that is lower than the annual dollar limit imposed on medical and surgical benefits. *See ERISA section 712; 29 CFR 2590.712.* ** Note: Limits on out-of-network mental health benefits may be lower than limits on medical and surgical benefits if limits on in-network mental health benefits are unlimited, or in parity with medical and surgical limits. *See 29 CFR 2590.712(b)(4), Example 3.* But, limits on inpatient and outpatient mental health benefits must separately be in parity with limits on medical and surgical benefits. *See 29 CFR 2590.712(b)(4), Example 2.* ◆ Remember only limits on what the plan is willing to pay are taken into account. A plan may impose annual dollar out-of-pocket limits on participants *and* beneficiaries without implicating MHPA.	☐	☐	
Question 33 – Constructive annual dollar limit **If the plan imposes a "constructive annual dollar limit" on mental health benefits, is the limit greater than or equal to that imposed on medical and surgical benefits?** ..... ◆ An annual visit limit that is coupled with a maximum dollar amount payable by the plan per visit is, in effect, an annual dollar limit. This is referred to as a constructive annual dollar limit. ◆ If this limit is less than the limit for medical and surgical benefits (or if there is no limit for medical surgical benefits), the plan is not in compliance with MHPA. ◆ Again, remember only limits on what the plan is willing to pay are taken into account.	☐	☐	☐
Question 34 – Substance abuse dollars counting against mental health dollar limit **Does the plan *exclude* substance abuse or chemical dependency benefits from its definition of "mental health benefits?"** ..... If the plan does not impose any explicit or constructive annual or lifetime dollar limits on mental health benefits, check "N/A" and skip to **Part III** of this checklist. If the plan imposes any explicit or constructive annual or lifetime dollar limit on mental health benefits, the plan must not count benefits for substance abuse or chemical dependency against the mental health dollar limit. **Tip:** Benefits for substance abuse and chemical dependency can be counted against a medical and surgical cap, or a separate substance abuse or chemical dependency cap. *See 29 CFR 2590.712(b)(4), Example 4 [using ERISA section 712(e)(4) definition of mental health benefits].*	☐	☐	☐

III. Determining Compliance with the Newborns' Act Provisions in Part 7 of ERISA			
If you answer "No" to any of the questions below, the group health plan is in violation of the Newborns' Act provisions in Part 7 of ERISA.			
	YES	**NO**	**N/A**
Section A – Newborns' Act Substantive Provisions The substantive provisions of the Newborns' Act apply only to certain plans, as follows: If the plan does not provide benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth, check "N/A" and go to **Part IV** of this checklist. (Note: Under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, most plans are required to cover maternity benefits.) ..... Special applicability rule for *insured coverage* that provides benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth: If the plan provides benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth, the plan is **insured,** and the coverage is in Wisconsin and several U.S. territories, it appears that the Federal Newborns' Act applies to the plan. If this is the case, answer the questions in **SECTION A and SECTION B.** If the plan provides benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth and is insured, whether the plan is subject to the Newborns' Act depends on State law. Based on a preliminary review of State laws as of January 1, 2005, if the coverage is in any other state or the District of Columbia, it appears that State law applies in lieu of the Federal Newborns' Act. If this is the case, check "N/A" and skip to **SECTION B** ..... *Self-insured* coverage that provides benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth: If the plan provides benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth and is *self-insured,* the Federal Newborns' Act applies. Answer the questions in **SECTION A and SECTION B.**			☐ ☐
Question 35 – General 48/96-hour stay rule **Does the plan comply with the general 48/96-hour rule?** ..... ◆ Plans generally may not restrict benefits for a hospital length of stay in connection with childbirth to less than 48 hours in the case of a vaginal delivery *(See ERISA section 711(a)(1)(A)(i)),* or less than 96 hours in the case of a cesarean section *(See ERISA section 711(a)(1)(A)(ii)).* ◆ Therefore, a plan cannot deny a mother or her newborn benefits within a 48/96-hour stay based on medical necessity. (A plan may require a mother to notify the plan of a pregnancy to obtain more favorable cost-sharing for the hospital stay. This second type of plan provision is permissible under the Newborns' Act if the cost-sharing is consistent throughout the 48/96-hour stay.) ◆ An attending provider may, however, decide, in consultation with the mother, to discharge the mother or newborn earlier.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 36 – Provider must not be required to obtain authorization from plan **Plans may not require providers to obtain authorization from the plan to prescribe a 48/96-hour stay. Does the plan comply with this rule?** ..... ◆ Plans may not require that a provider (such as a doctor) obtain authorization from the plan to prescribe a 48/96-hour stay. *See ERISA section 711(a)(1)(B); 29 CFR 2590.711(a)(4).* **Tips:** Watch for plan preauthorization requirements that are too broad. For example, a plan may have a provision requiring preauthorization for all hospital stays. Providers cannot be required to obtain preauthorization from the plan in order for the plan to cover a 48-hour (or 96-hour) stay in connection with childbirth. Therefore, in this example, the plan must add clarifying language to indicate that the general preauthorization requirement does not apply to 48/96-hour hospital stays in connection with childbirth. (Conversely, plans generally may require participants or beneficiaries to give notice of a pregnancy or hospital admission in connection with childbirth in order to obtain, for example, more favorable cost-sharing.) Nonetheless, the Newborns' Act does not prevent plans and issuers from requiring providers to obtain authorization for any portion of a hospital stay that exceeds 48 (or 96) hours.	☐	☐	
Question 37 – Incentives/penalties to mothers or providers **Does the plan comply with the Newborns' Act by avoiding impermissible incentives or penalties with respect to mothers or attending providers?** ..... ◆ Penalties to attending providers to discourage 48/96-hour stays violate ERISA section 711(b)(3) and 29 CFR 2590.711(b)(3)(i). ◆ Incentives to attending providers to encourage early discharges violate ERISA section 711(b)(4) and 29 CFR 2590.711(b)(3)(ii). ◆ Penalties imposed on mothers to discourage 48/96-hour stays violate ERISA section 711(b)(1) and 29 CFR 2590.711(b)(1)(i)(A). ◆ Incentives to mothers to encourage early discharges violate ERISA section 711(b)(2) and 29 CFR 2590.711(b)(1)(i)(B). ◈ An example of this would be if the plan waived the mother's copayment or deductible if mother or newborn leaves within 24 hours. ◆ Benefits and cost-sharing may not be less favorable for the latter portion of any 48/96-hour hospital stay. In this case less favorable benefits would violate ERISA section 711(b)(5) and 29 CFR 2590.711(b)(2) and less favorable cost-sharing would violate ERISA section 711(c)(3) and 29 CFR 2590.711(c)(3).	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
SECTION B – Disclosure Provisions Group health plans that provide benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth are required to make certain disclosures, as follows:			
Question 38 – Disclosure with respect to hospital lengths of stay in connection with childbirth **Does the plan comply with the notice provisions relating to hospital stays in connection with childbirth?** ..... ◆ Group health plans that provide benefits for hospital stays in connection with childbirth are required to make certain disclosures. Specifically, the group health plan's SPD must include a statement describing any requirements under Federal or State law applicable to the plan, and any health insurance coverage offered under the plan, relating to hospital length of stay in connection with childbirth for the mother or newborn child. *See the SPD content regulations at 29 CFR 2520.102-3(u).* **Tips:** Whether the plan is insured or self-insured, and whether the Federal Newborns' Act provisions or State law provisions apply to the coverage, the plan must provide a notice describing any requirements relating to hospital length of stays in connection with childbirth. A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 81.	☐	☐	

IV. Determining Compliance with the WHCRA Provisions in Part 7 of ERISA			
If you answer "No" to any of the questions below, the group health plan is in violation of the WHCRA provisions in Part 7 of ERISA.			
	YES	**NO**	**N/A**
WHCRA applies only to plans that offer benefits with respect to a mastectomy. If the plan does not offer these benefits, check "N/A" and you are finished with this checklist. If the plan does offer benefits with respect to a mastectomy, answer **Questions 39-42.**			☐
Question 39 – Four required coverages under WHCRA **Does the plan provide the four coverages required by WHCRA?** ◆ In the case of a participant or beneficiary who is receiving benefits in connection with a mastectomy, the plan shall provide coverage for the following benefits for individuals who elect them: ❖ All stages of reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy has been performed; ❖ Surgery and reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical appearance; ❖ Prostheses; and ❖ Treatment of physical complications of mastectomy, including lymphedema, in a manner determined in consultation with the attending provider and the patient. *See ERISA section 713(a).* ◆ These required coverages can be subject to annual deductibles and coinsurance provisions if consistent with those established for other medical and surgical benefits under the plan or coverage. **Tip:** Plans that cover benefits for mastectomies cannot categorically exclude benefits for reconstructive surgery or certain post-mastectomy services. In addition, time limits for seeking treatment may run afoul of the general requirement to provide the four required coverages.	☐	☐	
Question 40 – Incentive provisions **Does the plan comply with WHCRA by not providing impermissible incentives or penalties with respect to patients or attending providers?** ◆ A plan may not deny a patient eligibility to enroll or renew coverage solely to avoid WHCRA's requirements under ERISA section 713(c)(1). ◆ In addition, under ERISA section 713(c)(2), a plan may not penalize or offer incentives to an attending provider to induce the provider to furnish care in a manner inconsistent with WHCRA.	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A
Question 41 – Enrollment notice **Does the plan provide adequate and timely enrollment notices as required by WHCRA?** ..... ◆ Upon enrollment, a plan must provide a notice describing the benefits required under WHCRA. *See ERISA section 713(a).* ◆ The enrollment notice must describe the benefits that WHCRA requires the group health plan to cover, specifically: ❖ All stages of reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy was performed, ❖ Surgery and reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical appearance, ❖ Prostheses, and ❖ Physical complications resulting from mastectomy (including lymphedema). ◆ The enrollment notice must describe any deductibles and coinsurance limitations applicable to such coverage. (Note: Under WHCRA, coverage of the required benefits may be subject only to deductibles and coinsurance limitations consistent with those established for other medical and surgical benefits under the plan or coverage.) **Tip:** A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 82.	☐	☐	
Question 42 – Annual notice **Does the plan provide adequate and timely annual notices as required by WHCRA?** ..... ◆ Plans must provide notices describing the benefits required under WHCRA once each year. *See ERISA section 713(a).* ◆ To satisfy this requirement, the plan may redistribute the WHCRA enrollment notice or the plan may use a simplified disclosure that: ❖ Provides notice of the availability of benefits under the plan for reconstructive surgery, surgery to achieve symmetry between the breasts, prostheses, and physical complications resulting from mastectomy (including lymphedema); and ❖ Contact information (e.g., telephone number) for obtaining a detailed description of WHCRA benefits available under the plan. **Tip**: The WHCRA annual notice can be provided in the SPD if the plan distributes SPDs annually. If not, the plan should break off the annual notice into a separate disclosure. A model notice is provided in the Model Disclosures on page 83.	☐	☐	

[FR Doc. 05–23755 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4510–29–C

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice (05–161)]

Government-Owned Inventions, Available for Licensing

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

ACTION: Notice of availability of inventions for licensing.

SUMMARY: The inventions listed below assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, have been filed in the United States Patent and Trademark office, and are available for licensing.

DATES: December 9, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James J. McGroary; Patent Counsel, Marshall Space Flight Center, Mail Code LS01, Huntsville, AL 35812; telephone (256) 544–6580; fax (256) 544–0258.

NASA Case No. MFS–32136–1: Video Image Stabilization And Registration—Plus (VISAR+);

NASA Case No. MFS–32000–1: Miniature Housing With Standard Addressable Interface For Smart Sensors And Drive Electronics;

NASA Case No. MFS–31842–1: Gas Volume Contents Within A Container, Smart Volume Instrument.

Dated: December 5, 2005.

Keith T. Sefton,

Deputy General Counsel, Administration and Management.

[FR Doc. E5–7161 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510–13–P

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice (05–164)]

Government-Owned Inventions, Available for Licensing

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

ACTION: Notice of availability of inventions for licensing.

SUMMARY: The inventions listed below assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, have been filed in the United States Patent and Trademark office, and are available for licensing.

DATES: December 9, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Walker, Patent Counsel, Goddard Space Flight Center, Mail Code 140.1, Greenbelt, MD 20771–0001; telephone (301) 286–7351; fax (301) 286–9502.

NASA Case No. GSC–14562–1: Stepping Flexures;

NASA Case No. GSC–14941–1: Method And System For Direct Implementation Of Formal Specifications Derived Mechanically From Informal Requirements;

NASA Case No. GSC–14942–1: Method And System For Formal Analysis, Simulation, And Verification Of Knowledge-Based Systems, Rule-Based Systems, And Expert Systems;

NASA Case No. GSC–14793–1: Radiation Hardened Fast Acquisition/Weak Signal Tracking System And Method;

NASA Case No. GSC–14845–1: Demiseable Momentum Exchange System;

NASA Case No. GSC–14968–1: System And Method For Managing Autonomous Entities Through Apoptosis;

NASA Case No. GSC–14777–1: Large Area Vacuum Ultra-Violet Sensors;

NASA Case No. GSC–14,833–1: Systems And Method Of Analyzing Vibrations And Identifying Failure Signatures In the Vibrations;

NASA Case No. GSC–14955–1: Virtual Feel Capaciflectors;

NASA Case No. GSC–14994–1: A Split-Remerge Method For Eliminating Processing Window Artifacts In Recursive Hierarchical Segmentation.

Dated: December 5, 2005.

Keith T. Sefton,

Deputy General Counsel, Administration and Management.

[FR Doc. E5–7162 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510–13–P

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice (05–165)]

Government-Owned Inventions, Available for Licensing

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

ACTION: Notice of availability of inventions for licensing.

SUMMARY: The invention listed below is assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is the subject of a patent application that has been filed in the United States Patent and Trademark office, and is available for licensing.

DATES: December 9, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Homer, Patent Counsel, NASA Management Office—JPL, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Mail Stop 180–200, Pasadena, CA 91109; telephone (818) 354–7770.

NASA Case No. NPO–40530–1: Ultra Compact Spectrometer Apparatus and Method Using Photonic Crystals;

NASA Case No. NPO–40752: Improved Solar Cell Circuit and Method for Manufacturing Solar Cells.

Dated: December 5, 2005.

Keith T. Sefton,

Deputy General Counsel, Administration and Management.

[FR Doc. E5–7163 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510–13–P

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice (05–166)]

Government-Owned Inventions, Available for Licensing

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

ACTION: Notice of availability of inventions for licensing.

SUMMARY: The invention listed below is assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, has been filed in the United States Patent and Trademark office, and is available for licensing.

DATES: December 9, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Edward K. Fein, Patent Counsel, Johnson Space Center, Mail Code HA, Houston, TX 77058–8452; telephone (281) 483–4871; fax (281) 244–8452.

NASA Case No. MSC–23695–1: Connector Adapter;

NASA Case No. MSC–23846–1: Redesign Of The Human Metabolic Simulator.

Dated: December 5, 2005.

Keith T. Sefton,

Deputy General Counsel, Administration and Management.

[FR Doc. E5–7164 Filed 12–8–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510–13–P

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice (05–163)]

Government-Owned Inventions, Available for Licensing

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

ACTION: Notice of availability of inventions for licensing.