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# FEHB Program Carrier Letter

## All Carriers

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Healthcare and Insurance

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Date: August 23, 2013

Fee-for-service [17]

Experience-rated HMO [17]

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### Subject: Immunizations Provided by Government Health Clinics

This Carrier Letter provides guidance on providing payment to health clinics for immunizations<sup>1</sup> provided by government run health clinics, during periods when there may be a shortage of availability.

In recent years, there have been several human illnesses for which new vaccines have been developed. Timely immunization can prevent the spread of disease within a community, as well as preventing or shortening individual illness. A significant proportion of immunizations targeting emerging diseases are administered by state and local public health clinics, particularly if vaccine distribution is initially prioritized to high risk groups. Federal Employees Health Benefits Program enrollees who can most benefit from immunization need prompt access to vaccines, even when distribution is limited to public health clinics. Accordingly, OPM is releasing the following guidance on immunizations provided by government health clinics.

### Carriers Must Pay for Immunizations by Health Clinics

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) standard brochure states that the FEHB program does not cover services and supplies when a local, State, or Federal government agency directly or indirectly pays for them. This prohibition on dual payment exists to avoid the Federal government expending funds twice for the same services. However, due to the fact that these immunizations may have limited distribution and some may only be available at government run facilities, OPM wants to ensure that FEHB enrollees have adequate access to these services. Therefore, FEHB carriers must pay for such covered services under preventive benefits, at no cost share to the enrollee.

Please note that this policy is limited to immunizations which are: 1) covered by plan benefits; and 2) only those periods during which there is a shortage of the availability of the immunizations. Carriers are not required to pay for any other services that a local, State or Federal government agency provides or automatically include these providers in their network.

### Questions

If you have any questions regarding this carrier letter, please contact Rachel Royster at [Rachel.Royster@opm.gov](mailto:Rachel.Royster@opm.gov) or (202)-606-4181.

Sincerely,

John O'Brien  
Director  
Healthcare and Insurance

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this carrier letter, OPM is using the Center for Disease Control (CDC) definition of immunization. The CDC definition is: Immunizations are the process by which a person becomes protected against a disease. This term is often used interchangeably with vaccination or inoculation.