

Development of Public Use Files from Minnesota's All Payer Claims Dataset

The 2015 Legislature directed the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to develop a Public Use File (PUF) or multiple files containing summary information from the Minnesota All Payer Claims Database (MN APCD).¹ The purpose of the PUFs is to make MN APCD data more widely available for research and care improvement initiatives, while maintaining safeguards to protect sensitive information. MDH was charged with consulting the APCD workgroup formed in 2014 on technical issues related to the development of these summary files or data tables. The legislation requires that a first PUF be available by March 1, 2016, with annual updates and full development of an online access solution by June 2019.

APCDs are large-scale databases that collect administrative health care transaction data from health plans, third party administrators and pharmacy benefit managers, including eligibility, pharmacy and medical claims files, as well as information on actual transaction prices. Minnesota collects information on commercial, Medicare and Minnesota public program enrollees through this process. Data in the MN APCD is de-identified, which means identifying information such as names or birth dates are not included in the data.² Minnesota's APCD was established by legislative action in 2008, and its administration and allowable uses are governed by Minnesota Statutes, Section 62U.04.

The APCD provides a rich source of data that can be used to better understand variations in health care costs, quality, utilization and illness burden, supporting efforts to improve the health of all Minnesotans.

The requirement to develop PUFs represents an initial step towards making the MN APCD available for broader use. It flows from a set of recommendations by the 2014 advisory work group to the Legislature on potential future uses. This work group brought together members representing health care plans and providers, academics with expertise in the analysis of health care claims data and representatives of the public served by the health care system.³

Questions To Be Considered in the Development Process of PUFs

Generally, the development of Public Use Files aims to balance two goals: (1) preserving as much granular data for meaningful research as possible and (2) safeguarding protected information. Minnesota statute requires the protection of patients' identifying information – currently accomplished by de-identifying data. In addition, PUFs may not contain detail that permits the identification of health plans or providers.

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In developing PUFs, MDH will use a number of strategies that include interviewing a sample of potential data users, conducting analysis of PUFs available through other states or the federal government, consulting state and federal data submitters, and working with members from the 2014 APCD Advisory Group. These inputs will be used to address the following set of decisions:

- The number, size and content of summary PUFs or data tables to be made available in 2016;
- The level and type of aggregation of PUFs;
- The pathway to maturing the availability of PUFs;
- Necessary and appropriate measures to safeguard patient, provider and payer identities; and
- Background information to make available to users of PUFs or data tables.

MDH will convene two to four meetings of the workgroup between November 2015 and June of 2016. Information on these meetings will be available online on the homepage of the MN APCD: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/allpayer> and by subscribing to Minnesota's Health Reform announcements: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/govdelivery.html>.

The first set of PUF data will be available by March 1, 2016.

¹ Laws of Minnesota 2015, chapter 71, article 8, section 8

² For additional information see: MDH (2014), "Minnesota All Payer Claims Data: State Repository of Health Care Claims Data". http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/allpayer/mn_apcd_overviewreport_031715.pdf

³ Additional information about the work of the group, including its report to the Legislature, is available online: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/allpayer/workgroup.html>