PA 10-24

TO: Health Benefits Administrators of Participating Agencies with The Empire Plan
FROM: Employee Benefits Division
SUBJECT: Empire Plan Benefit Cards
DATE: July 19, 2010

As announced in our June 3, 2010 memo (PA10-14), the Department of Civil Service (Department) ceased issuing Empire Plan benefit cards for a limited period of time as a result of a vendor change. During this time period, a personalized letter was mailed to Empire Plan enrollees/dependents for all benefit card requests submitted on or after May 27, 2010. We are pleased to announce that the Department has resumed issuing benefit cards. Benefit cards ordered between May 27, 2010 and July 14, 2010 will be delivered to enrollees/dependents within the next two to three weeks. Please note that enrollees who received letters will be issued benefit cards automatically. Please do not re-request cards ordered on or after May 27, 2010. The typical 2-week turnaround time will resume with benefit cards ordered on or after July 15, 2010. Cards will be processed in the date order that they were placed. If an enrollee does not receive his/her card within these time frames, please contact your processor.

Card Issuance Rules
Although a new vendor is now issuing benefit cards on behalf of the Department, the benefit card and the rules for issuing cards remain unchanged. Enrollees with individual coverage will continue to receive one card while enrollees with family coverage will generally receive two identical cards with the enrollee's name and the names of all covered dependents. Since each card only lists up to six names, enrollees with family coverage who have six or more dependents will receive two additional cards (four cards total, two with the enrollee's name and the first five dependent names and two with the enrollee's name and the remaining dependent names). Dependents who reside at an address different from the enrollee will receive their card directly at such address when requested, as long as the dependent has a separate address entered into NYBEAS.

ID Card Production
With the changeover to the new vendor, we will no longer issue weekly reports to agencies detailing the cards requested. We found the reports were not widely used by agencies. Typically, enrollees receive their benefit cards within two to three weeks of the request date. Requests for benefit cards are sent to the vendor for production and issuance each Wednesday evening and are typically mailed early the following week. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the status of a card request, please contact your processor for assistance.

Keeping Enrollee Addresses Up To Date

In closing, the Department would like to take this opportunity to remind you that it is very important to keep enrollee addresses up-to-date. To protect enrollee health benefits information and lessen the possibility of fraud, the Department of Civil Service does **not** permit the Post Office to deliver benefit cards to a forwarding address. Cards mailed to addresses with forwarding addresses or bad addresses will be returned directly to you for distribution to the enrollee. Please be sure to ask an enrollee to verify their address prior to requesting a new or replacement benefit card, as the card will be mailed to the address on file in NYBEAS. If there are any dependents with second addresses, please be sure to verify them as well. Any benefit cards returned to your office should be kept in a secure location (in the sealed envelopes) and, within seven days, you should   update the address of the enrollee in NYBEAS prior to distributing the card to the enrollee. It is the Department's policy to require an enrollee's signature on all address changes; they may not be taken over the telephone, via email or from an unauthorized third party.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Empire Plan benefit cards, please contact your processor.