



# MidPenn Legal Services

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SECRETARY'S BUREAU

March 1, 2015

Rosemary Chiavetta  
Secretary, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission  
400 North Street, Keystone Bldg.  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

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Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

I write to comment on the proposed implementation of Chapter 14, specifically regarding the Medical Certification process.

I am an attorney with the Lancaster County office of MidPenn Legal Services, the civil legal aid agency that serves South Central Pennsylvania. Through various "Medical-Legal Partnership" collaborations in Lancaster, I have had the opportunity to work closely with health care providers in medical settings, including both a community health center and a specialized clinic within a major health care system, treating some of the lowest-income and most vulnerable members of our community. These experiences have given me some perspective on the practical impact of current medical certification rules on patients and health care practices, and illustrate how essential it is that the medical certification process remain flexible as to requirements of "form."

While the development of a universal form would be helpful, use of that particular form must be voluntary, allowing health care professionals to provide the required information in whatever form is most available and convenient to them, from a handwritten note on a prescription pad, to a typed letter, to a form developed by the health care provider, the utility company, or the PUC. Making a particular form mandatory will create unnecessary complications for busy health care providers and will cause unnecessary disruptions in or delays to restoration of service for seriously ill patients. By way of example: several years ago, a community health center with which I worked developed their own internal form, which complied with all current requirements, and submitted it on behalf of a particular patient. However, when UGI erroneously insisted that only their form was acceptable, it took several days to secure the doctor's signature on the UGI-provided different form. This is a reality of the flow of paperwork around a health care practice; these days, health care providers are drowning in paperwork and under pressure to see patients in high volume. It can take precious time for a rejected document to work its way through internal channels to be corrected and resubmitted. In



this example, the patient was without critical utility service for several days. Flexibility is essential for swift administration of a medical certification, in whatever form it might take, provided it contains the information necessary to confirm its authenticity.

In addition, health care providers need flexibility to develop their own forms, mechanisms, or processes that are most compatible with their internal recordkeeping systems and workflow. A mandated universal form might not be compatible with electronic medical records systems. Some health care practices are already comfortable with their own forms and processes. Changing the form could result in confusion and adverse health consequences for patients with serious health problems.

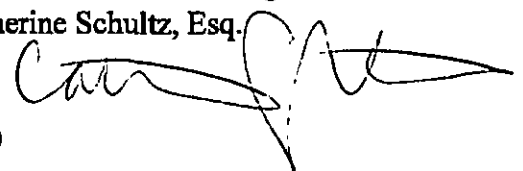
The information currently required for a medical certification exposes potentially sensitive and private patient health information. Details of the patient's condition are not necessary to verify the certification's authenticity. Asking for such detail invites utility company employees to substitute their judgment for that of trained medical professionals as to whether a particular condition is serious enough to require continuation of utility service. In my experience, medical professionals do not grant these certifications lightly. They give a great deal of thought and consideration into whether a certification is warranted in a particular situation and to developing appropriate internal policies. These decisions are made in keeping with their medical training and ethical duties. Utility companies should defer to those decisions, rather than being given an opening to question or override a medical professional's opinion.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these remarks.

Very truly yours,



Catherine Schultz, Esq.




CC: Dan Mumford, Bureau of Consumer Services (via email)  
Patricia T. Wiedt, Law Bureau (via email)

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