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GINA Warning Against Providing Genetic Information

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) prohibits collection of genetic information by both employers and health plans, and defines genetic information very broadly. Asking an individual to provide family medical history is considered collection of genetic information, even if there is no reward for responding (or penalty for failure to respond). In addition, a question about an individual's current health status is considered to be a request for genetic information if it is made in a way likely to result in obtaining genetic information (e.g., family medical history). Wellness programs that require completion of health risk assessments or other forms that request health information may violate the collection prohibition unless they fit within an exception to the prohibition for inadvertent acquisition of such information. This exception applies if the request does not violate any laws, does not ask for genetic information and includes a warning against providing genetic information in any responses. An employer administering a wellness program might include on the relevant forms a warning such as the one set out below.

GINA Warning for Wellness Program Materials Requesting Medical Information

In answering these questions, do not include any genetic information. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits employers and other entities covered by GINA from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we are asking that you not provide any genetic information when responding to this request. "Genetic information" as defined by GINA, includes an individual's family medical history, the results of an individual's or family member's genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual's family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual's family member or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services. Please do not include any family medical history or any information related to genetic testing, genetic services, genetic counseling or genetic diseases for which an individual may be at risk.