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Written requests for copies of the information collection proposal should be sent to Ms. Toppings at WHS/ESD/ Information Management Division, 1777 North Kent Street, RPN, Suite 11000, Arlington, VA 22209-2133.

Dated: December 4, 2009.

**Patricia L. Toppings,**

*OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer,  
Department of Defense.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Office of the Secretary

#### Notice of an Extension of a TRICARE Demonstration Project for the State of Alaska

**AGENCY:** Office of the Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)/TRICARE Management Activity, Department of Defense.

**ACTION:** Notice of extension of demonstration project.

**SUMMARY:** This notice advises interested parties of the extension of a Military Health System (MHS) demonstration project entitled "TRICARE Demonstration Project for the State of Alaska." The original demonstration notice was published on May 18, 2004 (69 FR 28124-28125), and described a demonstration project to exempt the underwriting provisions for the cost of civilian health care in the State of Alaska from the TRICARE managed care support contract for the Western Region. The demonstration was to be conducted for up to 5 years after the start of health care delivery under the contract and therefore, was scheduled to end on March 31, 2009. On February 23, 2009, a notice was published in the **Federal Register** (74 FR 8068-8069) to extend the demonstration for 1 additional year. As the rulemaking process has not yet been completed, the demonstration project will now be extended for 1 additional year (March 31, 2011).

There is no cost impact that is caused by this extension.

**DATES:** *Effective Date:* The extension of the demonstration will be effective April 1, 2010.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Michael O'Bar, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)—TRICARE Management Activity, TRICARE Policy and Operations Directorate, 5111 Leesburg Pike, Suite

810, Falls Church, VA 22041-3206; telephone (703) 681-0039.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### A. Background

For additional information on the TRICARE Demonstration Project for the State of Alaska, please see 74 FR 8068-8069. The demonstration notice focused on the unique situation involved in the delivery of health care services in the State of Alaska, which cannot be addressed fully by applying all of the at-risk standards that apply to the TRICARE managed care support contracts under which services are provided in the other 49 States without some modification. Under the extended demonstration, the current Western Region managed care support contractor will continue to be exempt from the underwriting provisions for the cost of civilian health care in the State of Alaska. The contractor shall provide all the services required for Alaska as specified in the TRICARE Operations Manual, Chapter 23, but will not be responsible for the underwriting fee associated with providing those services under that chapter. All other provisions contained in the TRICARE managed care support contract, TRICARE Operations Manual (6010.51-M), TRICARE Policy Manual 6010.54-M), TRICARE Systems Manual (7950.1-M), and TRICARE Reimbursement Manual (6010.55-M), shall apply in Alaska.

##### B. Description of Extension of Demonstration Project

The demonstration project will now be extended for 1 additional year (March 31, 2011).

Dated: December 15, 2009.

**Patricia L. Toppings,**

*OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer,  
Department of Defense.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Office of the Secretary

#### Extension of Provider Reimbursement Demonstration Project for the State of Alaska

**AGENCY:** Department of Defense (DoD).

**ACTION:** Notice of demonstration extension.

**SUMMARY:** This notice provides an extension of the demonstration project in the State of Alaska for individual provider payment rates. Under the demonstration, payment rates for physicians and other non-institutional

individual professional providers in the State of Alaska have been set at a rate higher than the Medicare rate. Further, the enhanced portion of the State of Alaska demonstration that provides for reimbursement of 101 percent of reasonable costs for inpatient and outpatient facilities of Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) is terminated because it is no longer necessary based on publication of the TRICARE Reimbursement of CAHs final rule (74 FR 44752) on August 31, 2009.

**DATES:** The portion of the demonstration regarding payment rates for physicians and other non-institutional providers is extended through December 31, 2010. The CAH portion of the demonstration shall end on November 30, 2009.

**ADDRESSES:** TRICARE Management Activity (TMA), Medical Benefits and Reimbursement Branch, 16401 East Centretech Parkway, Aurora, CO 80011-9066.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Glenn J. Corn, TRICARE Management Activity, Medical Benefits and Reimbursement Branch, telephone (303) 676-3566.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On November 20, 2006, DoD published a Notice of a TRICARE demonstration project for the State of Alaska, with an effective date of January 1, 2007 (71 FR 67113), to set payment rates for physicians and other non-institutional individual professional providers in the State of Alaska at a rate higher than the Medicare rate. The demonstration was effective January 1, 2007, for a period of three years, ending on December 31, 2009. Since that time, DoD has determined that increasing provider payment rates (factor rate increase) in Alaska, across all services, has shown mixed results on provider participation, beneficiary access to care, cost of health care services, military readiness, and morale and welfare. The Agency feels an extension of the demonstration is needed to provide more time to fully evaluate and implement a comprehensive framework for managing TRICARE in the State of Alaska. In the meantime, the Agency is looking toward developing a more comprehensive, updated management and reimbursement strategy that will provide a foundation for developing and implementing a comprehensive long-term plan through collaboration with Federal Service Partners for mutually accepted Federal rates. The demonstration continues to be conducted under statutory authority provided in 10 United States Code 1092.

Subsequent to the publication of the initial notice creating the increased rates