



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health (NIOSH)
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April 5, 2022

Ben Chevat
9/11 Health Watch, Inc.
c/o New York State AFL-CIO
100 South Swan Street
Albany, New York 12210

Dear Mr. Chevat:

Thank you for your February 16, 2022, letter on behalf of the Board of Directors of *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* to Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As Administrator of the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program (Program), I am pleased to respond on behalf of Dr. Walensky.

Your letter is in follow-up to a previous letter from *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* dated December 7, 2021, and expresses continuing concerns about the awarding and implementation of a contract supporting the WTC Health Program's administration of services under the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010 (Zadroga Act) to responder and survivor members of the Program living outside of the New York metropolitan area (NYMA).

As you know, the WTC Health Program refers to the contract supporting services to members living outside NYMA as the Nationwide Provider Network (NPN) contract. The current NPN contractor is Logistics Health Incorporated (LHI). LHI has been the WTC Health Program's NPN contractor since the Program's inception and was also involved in predecessor programs for the population affected by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. On November 29, 2021, CDC awarded a new NPN contract to Managed Care Advisors (MCA).¹ Currently, the NPN contractor remains LHI while a transition to the new onboarding contractor, MCA, is completed to the satisfaction of the WTC Health Program.

¹ In September 2021, after MCA submitted their application to serve as the NPN contractor, it was announced that Sedgwick had acquired MCA. See <https://www.sedgwick.com/news/2021/sedgwick-acquires-managed-care-advisors>

Continuity of Care

In your February 16, 2022, letter you state that the chief concern of *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* is ensuring continuity of care for NPN members during the transition from LHI to MCA. The WTC Health Program shares your concern and understands that members with fragile health conditions may be at higher risk of adverse outcomes during any type of medical care transition.

As stated in my January 24, 2022 response to *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.*'s December 7, 2021, letter:

The onboarding NPN contractor is not new to the WTC Health Program or to the work required by the contract. MCA has been the PBM contractor for five years and, as a result, already has experience with the WTC Health Program's claims processing system, including coordination of benefits and benefits eligibility based on certified health conditions. In addition, MCA and Sedgwick previously served as the Case Management and external provider network contractor for Northwell Health (one of the WTC Health Program's CCEs). Their experience has given them an understanding of the complexity of care for responder and survivor members and the high level of involvement by case managers required for transitions between in-facility care and outpatient care.

If *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* learns of any member experiencing a lapse of care due to the NPN contract transition, please contact the Program immediately.

Transparency

Your February 16, 2022, letter requests a number of "records related to the old and new contracts online...".

I understand your request for the contract documents specified in your February 16, 2022 as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.² The Program will work with the NIOSH and CDC FOIA offices to expedite your request for documents that you would like CDC to produce.

The Program shares your interest in ensuring that NPN contractor performance metrics cover all vital member activities, and that agrees evaluating the ongoing performance of the onboarding NPN contractor and holding that contractor accountable for lapses in any of those performance metrics, is crucial to continuity of care for the members. As stated in my January 24, 2022, letter to *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.*, the WTC Health Program is committed to transparency regarding the NPN transition:

Engagement with the Clinical Centers of Excellence (CCEs), the Responder Steering Committee, and the Survivor Steering Committee will be crucial in ensuring that the transition from the current NPN contractor to the onboarding contractor is successful. At appropriate venues, such as weekly CCE/NPN group conference calls and monthly Steering Committee meetings, the WTC Health Program will continue to facilitate

² <https://www.cdc.gov/od/foia/>

information-sharing interactions with the onboarding NPN contractor. The inclusion of the onboarding contractor in these meetings will be immediate.

Price Reasonableness

You inquired whether, as a part of the NPN contract awarding process, CDC engaged in “an evaluation process to identify if any bids were too high or too low to provide the services.” For the NPN contract, CDC followed the process outlined in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and the solicitation.³

Performance Metrics

Your letter expresses concern about ensuring that the onboarding contractor will be held to “clear and concise” performance metrics to ensure successful services for WTC Health Program members. The Program agrees that clear, concise, achievable, and transparent performance requirements are essential to contract administration and contractor accountability. During the transition process, performance requirements, metrics, and accountability procedures are being further refined and finalized. As the transition proceeds, the Program looks forward to engaging with all of its contractors, members, member representatives and advocates on NPN contract performance metrics.

Logistics Health Incorporated (LHI) Services During the Transition

Your letter cites instances in which you believe the current contractor is failing to maintain services that they are obligated to maintain under their current contract. The Program is aware of instances of prolonged wait times for services, and is addressing those instances, but if you have knowledge of specific situations that are not being addressed, please share them with Jessica Bilics, WTC Health Program Policy Coordinator, at hvg8@cdc.gov. Working together, we can intervene on a member’s behalf to address their needs and ensure continuity of care during the NPN contract transition.

Go-Live Date

Any “Go-Live Date” on the MCA contract is dependent on the onboarding contractor demonstrating to the WTC Health Program that its systems are fully operational, and it has met all performance requirements established by the Program. As your letter correctly notes, the new contractor “will not take over until the Program is satisfied that the new contractor can carry out the contract.”

As stated in my January 24, 2022, letter to *911 Health Watch, Inc.*,

Importantly, neither the current PBM or NPN contract will terminate until the WTC Health Program is satisfied with the transition from current to onboarding contractors. Only then will a “go live” signal occur. Significant activities must be completed before a “go live” signal is given. Projects managers from both current and onboarding

³ See <https://www.acquisition.gov/browse/index/far>

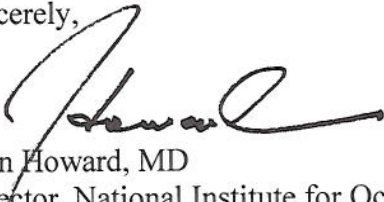
contractors, as well as from the WTC Health Program and the NIOSH Office of the Director of Information Technology (ODIT), have been assigned to the initial implementation process. The WTC Health Program has also secured the services of a separate contractor to aid the Program in an Integrated Vendor Transition Team (IVTT).

In light of the many moving parts involved into onboarding a new NPN contractor, including negotiating and finalizing specific performance metrics, any pre-set “Go-Live Date” is aspirational. Once the Program completes all the necessary transition activities involving the new NPN contractor it will announce a final “Go-Live Date.”

I hope that the foregoing information addresses the concerns of *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* regarding the transition from the current NPN contractor to the onboarding contractor. I hope that *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* will remain engaged directly with the WTC Health Program and/or through the Steering Committees to ensure any transition concerns are quickly brought to the Program’s attention.

Thank you for *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.*’s continuing support of the WTC Health Program. If you should have any additional concerns or questions, I invite you or members of the *9/11 Health Watch, Inc.* Board of Directors to reach out to Dori Reissman, MD, MPH, WTC Health Program Associate Administrator, at dvs7@cdc.gov, or Jessica Bilics, WTC Health Program Policy Coordinator, at hvg8@cdc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Howard", written over a horizontal line.

John Howard, MD
Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Administrator, World Trade Center Health Program