

Health First Health Plans Introduces Innovative Service to help Members Access Social Security Disability Benefits

Rockledge, FL (September 2007) -- Health First Health Plans (HFHP) has recently launched an innovative program to provide professional Social Security Disability representation to its members. HFHP has selected Tethys Health Ventures (Tethys) in partnership with Social Service Coordinators, Inc. (SSC), to assist HFHP members interested in applying for disability benefits offered through the Social Security Administration. Tethys offers superior government program advocacy services to managed care members.

The federal disability programs are designed to help individuals who are no longer able to support themselves due to a health condition or conditions. In addition to a monthly cash benefit, eligible members will, after a waiting period, become eligible for Medicare. Social Security Disability applications are complex, requiring medical and administrative documentation of eligibility. Many potentially eligible members are unaware of the programs, or have been unable to submit a complete application. Tethys is uniquely positioned to help these members with electronic recreation of all relevant forms, and professional disability advocates who serve as the member's authorized representative.

Tethys will provide HFHP members with professional advocacy through initial applications and, where necessary, reconsideration and appeals. Tim Koch, Tethys' Chief Executive Officer commented, "Many members are unaware of their eligibility, or that they have paid into a federal insurance program to provide benefits in the event of deterioration in health. We at Tethys are pleased to be able to educate the population about these programs and to provide professional disability assistance. We believe that Health First Health Plans has shown a strong commitment to serving its most vulnerable members."

This service will help members access the federal cash benefits for which they are eligible, as well as coverage through Medicare, and protection of future Social Security retirement benefits. According to Peter Weiss, MD, CEO of HFHP, "We are excited to offer this innovative service to our members. After extensive investigation we are convinced that Tethys will provide superior service to help our eligible members. With over 60% of all first time applications being rejected by the Social Security Administration we recognized that qualifying for these benefits was a difficult challenge – a challenge we are pleased to help our members meet."

Based in Rockledge, Florida, HFHP has served residents of Brevard County and part of Sebastian in Indian River County for 14 years. HFHP was founded as part of Health First, a not-for-profit family of healthcare services that also includes Cape Canaveral Hospital, Holmes Regional Medical Center, Palm Bay Hospital, and Health First Physicians. For more information, visit www.healthfirsthealthplans.org or call 321.434.5665 (toll-free 800-716-7737).

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