

Administrative Procedures – Emergency Rule Filing

Instructions:

In accordance with Title 3 Chapter 25 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated and the “Rule on Rulemaking” (CVR 04-000-001) adopted by the Office of the Secretary of State, this emergency filing will be considered complete upon filing and acceptance of these forms with the Office of the Secretary of State, the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules and a copy with the Chair of the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules.

All forms requiring a signature shall be original signatures of the appropriate adopting authority or authorized person, and all filings are to be submitted at the Office of the Secretary of State, no later than 3:30 pm on the last scheduled day of the work week.

The data provided in text areas of these forms will be used to generate a notice of rulemaking in the portal of “Proposed Rule Postings” online, and the newspapers of record if the rule is marked for publication. Publication of notices will be charged back to the promulgating agency.

This emergency rule may remain in effect for a total of 180 days from the date it first takes effect.

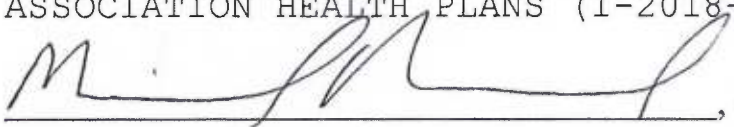
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DEC 31 2018

Certification Statement: As the adopting Authority of this rule (see 3 V.S.A. § 801(b)(11) for a definition), I believe there exists an imminent peril to public health, safety or welfare, requiring the adoption of this emergency rule.

The nature of the peril is as follows (*PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF SPACE IS INSUFFICIENT*). The emergency rule ensures that Vermont consumers are protected and the Vermont health insurance market is stabilized with regard to self-insure AHPs, which may operate on or after January 1, 2019.

I approve the contents of this filing entitled:

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

 , on 12/27/18
(signature) (date)

Printed Name and Title:

Michael S. Pieciak, Commissioner DFR

RECEIVED BY: _____

- Coversheet
- Adopting Page
- Economic Impact Analysis
- Environmental Impact Analysis
- Strategy for Maximizing Public Input
- Scientific Information Statement (if applicable)
- Incorporated by Reference Statement (if applicable)
- Clean text of the rule (Amended text without annotation)
- Annotated text (Clearly marking changes from previous rule)

Emergency Rule Coversheet

1. TITLE OF RULE FILING:

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. ADOPTING AGENCY:

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. PRIMARY CONTACT PERSON:

(A PERSON WHO IS ABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE RULE).

Name: Emily Brown

Agency: DFR Insurance Director of Rates and Forms, Life and Health

Mailing Address: 89 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620-3101

Telephone: 802 828 - 4871 Fax: 802 828 - 1919

E-Mail: emily.brown@vermont.gov

Web URL *(WHERE THE RULE WILL BE POSTED)*:

<http://www.dfr.vermont.gov/proposed-rules-and-regulations>

4. SECONDARY CONTACT PERSON:

(A SPECIFIC PERSON FROM WHOM COPIES OF FILINGS MAY BE REQUESTED OR WHO MAY ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT FORMS SUBMITTED FOR FILING IF DIFFERENT FROM THE PRIMARY CONTACT PERSON).

Name: Steph Hoffman

Agency: DFR Assistant General Counsel

Mailing Address: 89 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620-3101

Telephone: 802 828 - 1316 Fax: 802 828 - 1919

E-Mail: steph.hoffman@vermont.gov

5. RECORDS EXEMPTION INCLUDED WITHIN RULE:

(DOES THE RULE CONTAIN ANY PROVISION DESIGNATING INFORMATION AS CONFIDENTIAL; LIMITING ITS PUBLIC RELEASE; OR OTHERWISE EXEMPTING IT FROM INSPECTION AND COPYING?) Yes

IF YES, CITE THE STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THE EXEMPTION:

8 V.S.A. § 3574

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE REASON FOR THE EXEMPTION:

Emergency Rule Coversheet

Pursuant to 8 V.S.A. § 3574(d)(4), all working papers, recorded information, documents and copies thereof produced by, obtained by or disclosed to the Commissioner or any other person in the course of an examination are confidential and are not subject to subpoena and may not be made public by the Commissioner or any other person, except to the extent provided in § 3574(d) and (e). This exemption is necessary to encourage forthcoming and honest reporting of fraudulent market activity.

6. LEGAL AUTHORITY / ENABLING LEGISLATION:

(THE SPECIFIC STATUTORY OR LEGAL CITATION FROM SESSION LAW INDICATING WHO THE ADOPTING ENTITY IS AND THUS WHO THE SIGNATORY SHOULD BE. THIS SHOULD BE A SPECIFIC CITATION NOT A CHAPTER CITATION).

8 V.S.A. §§ 10, 11, 3368 and 4079a

7. EXPLANATION OF HOW THE RULE IS WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE AGENCY:

8 V.S.A. §§ 10, 11 ALLOWS THE COMMISSIONER OF FINANCIAL REGULATION TO SUPERVISE AND REGULATE INSURANCE COMPANIES, INSURANCE, AGENTS, BROKER DEALERS, AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF HEALTH CARE IN A MANNER TO ASSURE THE SOLVENCY, LIQUIDITY, STABILITY, AND EFFICIENCY OF SUCH ENTITIES. SECTION 11 ALSO REQUIRES ALL SUCH ENTITIES TO BE SUPERVISED IN A WAY AS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS AGAINST UNFAIR AND UNCONSCIONABLE PRACTICES. 8 V.S.A. §4079A REQUIRES THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION TO PROMULGATE RULES TO REGULATE ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (AHPs).

8. CONCISE SUMMARY (150 WORDS OR LESS):

In June 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) released its final rule relating to the creation of Association Health Plans (AHPs). The rule allows small businesses to band together by geography or industry to provide health care coverage to their members as if they were a single large employer. The DOL's final rule allows states significant flexibility in regulating AHPs. To promote the stability of Vermont's health insurance markets and to ensure that Vermonters who join AHPs receive affordable coverage and the benefits to which they are entitled under state and federal law, this rule establishes a regulatory framework that requires self-insured AHPs to provide comprehensive health insurance plans that protect their members and do not compete unfairly with the

comprehensive coverage offered on Vermont Health Connect (VHC). The rule treats self-insured AHPs as insurers and subjects them to the same regulatory requirements.

9. EXPLANATION OF WHY THE RULE IS NECESSARY:

Under the DOL final rule, preexisting self-insured AHPs can begin operating on January 1, 2019 and new self-insured AHPs can begin operating on April 1, 2019. This emergency rule is necessary to ensure that self-insured AHPs, which begin operating on or after January 1st, meet the same requirements as insurers operating in the Vermont marketplace to provide affordable, comprehensive health care coverage rather than limited benefit plans that erode the stability of Vermont's health insurance market. This rule serves as a stop-gap until the final rule can be adopted.

10. EXPLANATION OF HOW THE RULE IS NOT ARBITRARY:

This rule is not arbitrary because the changes to the Federal rules governing AHPs have the ability to impact the Vermont insurance marketplace and the quality of coverage offered to individuals and small employers as well as negatively impact the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange) risk pool.

11. LIST OF PEOPLE, ENTERPRISES AND GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS RULE:

Green Mountain Care Board, Department of Vermont Health Access, Vermont Health Connect, health insurance companies, small businesses and their employees, sole proprietors and self-employed individuals, business associations that may offer fully-insured AHP plans to their members

12. BRIEF SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC IMPACT (150 WORDS OR LESS):

Self-insured AHPs may make comprehensive health care coverage more affordable to small businesses, but there is a risk of increased costs, particularly for current participants on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange). Self-insured AHPs may result in some migration of healthy lives away from the Exchange, but this migration will be mitigated by requiring self-insured AHPs to submit to the same regulations that apply to insurers in Vermont. At the present time, it is impossible to quantify the impact that self-insured AHPs will have on premiums on the Exchange,

Emergency Rule Coversheet

but the DFR anticipates little to no market participation due to the robust regulatory requirements imposed on insurers.

13. A HEARING IS NOT SCHEDULED .

14. HEARING INFORMATION

(THE FIRST HEARING SHALL BE NO SOONER THAN 30 DAYS FOLLOWING THE POSTING OF NOTICES ONLINE).

IF THIS FORM IS INSUFFICIENT TO LIST THE INFORMATION FOR EACH HEARING PLEASE ATTACH A SEPARATE SHEET TO COMPLETE THE HEARING INFORMATION NEEDED FOR THE NOTICE OF RULEMAKING.

Date:

Time: AM

Street Address:

Zip Code:

Date:

Time: AM

Street Address:

Zip Code:

15. DEADLINE FOR COMMENT (NO EARLIER THAN 7 DAYS FOLLOWING LAST HEARING):

16. EMERGENCY RULE EFFECTIVE: 12/28/2018

17. EMERGENCY RULE WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL

(A DATE NO LATER THAN 180 DAYS FOLLOWING ADOPTION OF THIS EMERGENCY RULE):

06/25/2019

18. NOTICE OF THIS EMERGENCY RULE SHOULD NOT BE PUBLISHED IN THE WEEKLY NOTICES OF RULEMAKING IN THE NEWSPAPERS OF RECORD.

19. KEYWORDS (PLEASE PROVIDE AT LEAST 3 KEYWORDS OR PHRASES TO AID IN THE SEARCHABILITY OF THE RULE NOTICE ONLINE).

Health Insurance

Association Health Plans

Vermont Health Connect

Self-Insured

Administrative Procedures – Adopting Page

Instructions:

This form must accompany each filing made during the rulemaking process:

Note: To satisfy the requirement for an annotated text, an agency must submit the entire rule in annotated form with proposed and final proposed filings. Filing an annotated paragraph or page of a larger rule is not sufficient. Annotation must clearly show the changes to the rule.

When possible the agency shall file the annotated text, using the appropriate page or pages from the Code of Vermont Rules as a basis for the annotated version. New rules need not be accompanied by an annotated text.

1. **TITLE OF RULE FILING:**

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. **ADOPTING AGENCY:**

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. **TYPE OF FILING** (*PLEASE CHOOSE THE TYPE OF FILING FROM THE DROPDOWN MENU BASED ON THE DEFINITIONS PROVIDED BELOW*):

- **AMENDMENT** - Any change to an already existing rule, even if it is a complete rewrite of the rule, it is considered an amendment as long as the rule is replaced with other text.
- **NEW RULE** - A rule that did not previously exist even under a different name.
- **REPEAL** - The removal of a rule in its entirety, without replacing it with other text.

This filing is **A NEW RULE** .

4. **LAST ADOPTED** (*PLEASE PROVIDE THE SOS LOG#, TITLE AND EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE LAST ADOPTION FOR THE EXISTING RULE*):

Administrative Procedures – Economic Impact Analysis

Instructions:

In completing the economic impact analysis, an agency analyzes and evaluates the anticipated costs and benefits to be expected from adoption of the rule; estimates the costs and benefits for each category of people enterprises and government entities affected by the rule; compares alternatives to adopting the rule; and explains their analysis concluding that rulemaking is the most appropriate method of achieving the regulatory purpose.

Rules affecting or regulating schools or school districts must include cost implications to local school districts and taxpayers in the impact statement, a clear statement of associated costs, and consideration of alternatives to the rule to reduce or ameliorate costs to local school districts while still achieving the objectives of the rule (see 3 V.S.A. § 832b for details).

Rules affecting small businesses (excluding impacts incidental to the purchase and payment of goods and services by the State or an agency thereof), must include ways that a business can reduce the cost or burden of compliance or an explanation of why the agency determines that such evaluation isn't appropriate, and an evaluation of creative, innovative or flexible methods of compliance that would not significantly impair the effectiveness of the rule or increase the risk to the health, safety, or welfare of the public or those affected by the rule.

1. TITLE OF RULE FILING:

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. ADOPTING AGENCY:

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. CATEGORY OF AFFECTED PARTIES:

LIST CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE, ENTERPRISES, AND GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES POTENTIALLY AFFECTED BY THE ADOPTION OF THIS RULE AND THE ESTIMATED COSTS AND BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

Green Mountain Care Board, Department of Vermont Health Access, Vermont Health Connect, health insurance companies, small businesses and their employees, sole proprietors and self-employed individuals, business associations that may offer fully-insured AHP plans to their members.

4. IMPACT ON SCHOOLS:

Economic Impact Analysis

INDICATE ANY IMPACT THAT THE RULE WILL HAVE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, PUBLIC SCHOOLS, LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS CLEARLY STATING ANY ASSOCIATED COSTS:

None.

5. ALTERNATIVES: *CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES TO THE RULE TO REDUCE OR AMELIORATE COSTS TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHILE STILL ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RULE.*

There is no cost to local school districts.

6. IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES:

INDICATE ANY IMPACT THAT THE RULE WILL HAVE ON SMALL BUSINESSES (EXCLUDING IMPACTS INCIDENTAL TO THE PURCHASE AND PAYMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES BY THE STATE OR AN AGENCY THEREOF):

Should any self-insured associations enter the Vermont insurance marketplace, this rule requires them to participate on equal footing with a licensed insurer conducting business in Vermont. The plans offered would have to provide levels of health insurance coverage to small employers that are comparable to health insurance coverage purchased on the Exchange.

7. SMALL BUSINESS COMPLIANCE: *EXPLAIN WAYS A BUSINESS CAN REDUCE THE COST/BURDEN OF COMPLIANCE OR AN EXPLANATION OF WHY THE AGENCY DETERMINES THAT SUCH EVALUATION ISN'T APPROPRIATE.*

Small businesses will not have to comply with any aspect of this rule. Rather the associations offering coverage in compliance with this rule will bear the cost and burden of that compliance.

8. COMPARISON:

COMPARE THE IMPACT OF THE RULE WITH THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO THE RULE, INCLUDING NO RULE ON THE SUBJECT OR A RULE HAVING SEPARATE REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL BUSINESS:

The rule requires self-insured AHPs operating in Vermont to operate as a licensed insurer, which includes requirements to offer comprehensive health insurance coverage complying with all state benefit mandates. This requirement will protect self-insured AHP members and their dependents who experience serious health conditions and, at the same time, will help limit upward premium pressure on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange). If there were no rule or no

Economic Impact Analysis

requirement that self-insured AHPs operate as a licensed insurer, self-insured AHPs could offer limited benefit or "skinny" health insurance plans that appeal to the youngest and healthiest lives on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange).

9. SUFFICIENCY: *EXPLAIN THE SUFFICIENCY OF THIS ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS.*

This economic impact analysis is sufficient because it has considered the potential impact on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange) and risks self-insured associations pose to Vermont consumers and the Vermont insurance marketplace. The rule also contemplates the costs to the associations to comply with the regulatory requirements of licensed insurers. It has weighed the economic impact that unregulated health benefit plans offered by self-insured associations could have on individuals and small employers who are currently participating in a stable health insurance marketplace. With the unregulated proliferation of these plans, individuals and small employers could be exposed to a great amount of risk and coverage exposure.

Administrative Procedures – Environmental Impact Analysis

Instructions:

In completing the environmental impact analysis, an agency analyzes and evaluates the anticipated environmental impacts (positive or negative) to be expected from adoption of the rule; compares alternatives to adopting the rule; explains the sufficiency of the environmental impact analysis.

Examples of Environmental Impacts include but are not limited to:

- Impacts on the emission of greenhouse gases
- Impacts on the discharge of pollutants to water
- Impacts on the arability of land
- Impacts on the climate
- Impacts on the flow of water
- Impacts on recreation
- Or other environmental impacts

1. TITLE OF RULE FILING:

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. ADOPTING AGENCY:

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR) Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. GREENHOUSE GAS: *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACTS THE EMISSION OF GREENHOUSE GASES (E.G. TRANSPORTATION OF PEOPLE OR GOODS; BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE; LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT, WASTE GENERATION, ETC.):*

None.

4. WATER: *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACTS WATER (E.G. DISCHARGE / ELIMINATION OF POLLUTION INTO VERMONT WATERS, THE FLOW OF WATER IN THE STATE, WATER QUALITY ETC.):*

None.

5. LAND: *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACTS LAND (E.G. IMPACTS ON FORESTRY, AGRICULTURE ETC.):*

None.

6. RECREATION: *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACT RECREATION IN THE STATE:*

None.

7. CLIMATE: *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACTS THE CLIMATE IN THE STATE:*

None.

Environmental Impact Analysis

8. **OTHER:** *EXPLAIN HOW THE RULE IMPACT OTHER ASPECTS OF VERMONT'S ENVIRONMENT:*

None.

9. **SUFFICIENCY:** *EXPLAIN THE SUFFICIENCY OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS.*

This rule does not have an environmental impact.

Administrative Procedures – Public Input

Instructions:

In completing the public input statement, an agency describes the strategy prescribed by ICAR to maximize public input, what it did do, or will do to comply with that plan to maximize the involvement of the public in the development of the rule.

This form must accompany each filing made during the rulemaking process:

1. **TITLE OF RULE FILING:**

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. **ADOPTING AGENCY:**

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. **PLEASE DESCRIBE THE STRATEGY PRESCRIBED BY ICAR TO MAXIMIZE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED RULE:**

Does not apply to emergency rulemaking.

4. **PLEASE LIST THE STEPS THAT HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE TAKEN TO COMPLY WITH THAT STRATEGY:**

DFR has sought input from the principal stakeholders who will be affected by this rule, including insurance companies, Vermont consumer groups, and other Vermont agencies involved in the regulation and delivery of health insurance. The Department has engaged stakeholders throughout the development of its fully-insured AHP rule, and has incorporated the lessons learned during that process in formulating its self-insured AHP rule.

5. **BEYOND GENERAL ADVERTISEMENTS, PLEASE LIST THE PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED RULE:**

The following stakeholders have been in contact with the Department about the development of its association health plan rules: Green Mountain Care Board, Department of Vermont Health Access, Vermont Health Connect, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, MVP

Healthcare, Delta Dental, the Vermont Office of the Health Advocate, the American Diabetes Association, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Business Resource Solutions, and Hickok and Boardman.

Administrative Procedures – Incorporation by Reference

THIS FORM IS ONLY REQUIRED WHEN INCORPORATING MATERIALS BY REFERENCE. PLEASE REMOVE PRIOR TO DELIVERY IF IT DOES NOT APPLY TO THIS RULE FILING:

Instructions:

In completing the incorporation by reference statement, an agency describes any materials that are incorporated into the rule by reference and how to obtain copies.

This form is only required when a rule incorporates materials by referencing another source without reproducing the text within the rule itself (e.g. federal or national standards, or regulations).

Incorporated materials will be maintained and available for inspection by the Agency.

1. TITLE OF RULE FILING:

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS (I-2018-02-E)

2. ADOPTING AGENCY:

Department of Financial Regulation (DFR)

3. DESCRIPTION (*DESCRIBE THE MATERIALS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE*):

Code of Federal Regulation: 29 C.F.R. §§ 2510; 45 C.F.R. §§ 158.210-240; 29 C.F.R. § 2590.715-2711.

Federal Register: 83 Fed. Reg. 28,961 (June 21, 2018)

U.S. Code Annotated: 29 U.S.C. §§ 1002, 1144; 42 U.S.C. § 18022

Vermont Statutes Annotated: 1 V.S.A. § 317; Title 8; 8 V.S.A. §§ 13, 18, 80, 3301-3696, 4061-4100k, 4515a, 4587, 4721-4726, 4791-4826, 5104, 6001-6048o; 18 V.S.A. §§ 9401-9474; 33 V.S.A. §§ 1802, 9414a

DFR Regulations: 99-01, H-2009-02, H-2009-03, H-2011-02

4. FORMAL CITATION OF MATERIALS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE:

See answer to paragraph 3 above.

Incorporation By Reference

5. **OBTAINING COPIES:** *EXPLAIN WHERE THE PUBLIC MAY OBTAIN THE MATERIAL(S) IN WRITTEN OR ELECTRONIC FORM, AND AT WHAT COST):*

All of the cited materials are available online at the following links:

Code of Federal Regulation

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/06/21/2018-12992/definition-of-employer-under-section-35-of-erisa-association-health-plans>

Federal Register:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/06/21/2018-12992/definition-of-employer-under-section-35-of-erisa-association-health-plans>

U.S. Code Annotated

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text>

Vermont Statutes Annotated

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/>

DFR Regulations

<http://www.dfr.vermont.gov/reg-bul-ord/consumer-protection-and-quality-requirements-managed-care-organizations>

Phil Keller at the Department can be contacted via phone at (802) 828-1464 for access to paper copies of these materials should you not have internet access.

6. **MODIFICATIONS** (*PLEASE EXPLAIN ANY MODIFICATION TO THE INCORPORATED MATERIALS E.G., WHETHER ONLY PART OF THE MATERIAL IS ADOPTED AND IF SO, WHICH PART(S) ARE MODIFIED*):

None.

Run Spell Check

Clean
Text

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION

RULE I-2018-02-E

SELF-INSURED MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS AND
ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Section 1. Purpose

This rule is promulgated pursuant to 8 V.S.A. § 4079a and in response to the United States Department of Labor’s June 21, 2018 amendment to 29 C.F.R. § 2510. See Definition of “Employer” Under Section 3(5) of ERISA—Association Health Plans, 83 Fed. Reg. 28,961 (June 21, 2018) (to be codified at 29 C.F.R. § 2510.3-5). The purpose of this rule is to set forth rules, forms, and procedures regarding self-insured association or MEWA health plans. This rule protects Vermont consumers and promotes the stability of Vermont’s health insurance markets, to the extent permitted under federal law, by implementing licensure, solvency, reserve, and rating requirements. This rule shall not apply to association health plans that are fully funded. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to provide a self-insured association or MEWA authority to operate in the State before January 1, 2019.

Section 2. Definitions

The following terms are defined for purposes of this rule as follows:

- A. “Association” means any foreign or domestic association that provides a health benefit plan that covers the employees of at least one employer that is either domiciled in Vermont or has its principal headquarters or principal administrative office in Vermont.
- B. “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation.
- C. “Department” means the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation.
- D. “Employee Welfare Benefit Plan,” as used in this rule, has the same meaning as that contained in 29 U.S.C. § 1002(1).
- E. “Health Benefit Plan” means a policy, contract, certificate, or agreement offered or issued by a self-insured association or MEWA to provide, deliver, arrange for, pay for, or reimburse any of the costs of health services, as defined in 33 V.S.A. § 1802(3).
- F. “Multiple employer welfare arrangement (MEWA),” as used in this rule, has the same meaning as that contained in 29 U.S.C. § 1002(40).

- G. "Self-Insured" means any association or MEWA offering a health benefit plan that reimburses costs of health services incurred by covered persons pursuant to the benefits and coverages provided by their plan exclusively from association or MEWA assets.
- H. "Third-party Administrator" means any person who, on behalf of an association or MEWA, receives or collects charges, contributions, or premiums for, or adjusts or settles claims on or for residents of this State or Vermont health care providers and facilities.

Section 3. Authority

The Department has authority to promulgate rules for domestic and foreign self-insured association health benefit plans pursuant to 8 V.S.A. §§ 3368 and 4079a(b) and 29 U.S.C. § 1144(b)(6)(A)(ii). The Department has authority to regulate any association or MEWA offering a self-insured health benefit plan in this State.

Section 4. Captive

Self-insured associations and MEWAs insured via a captive insurance company are exempt from this rule pursuant to 8 V.S.A. § 6016. Such associations and MEWAs will be regulated by the Department's Captive Insurance Division per 8 V.S.A. Chapter 141.

Section 5. Licensing Requirement

No association or MEWA may offer a self-insured health benefit plan in this State unless duly licensed with the Department. An association or MEWA shall be licensed and regulated in accordance with Title 8 V.S.A. Chapter 101, and all applicable regulations. The application for license shall be on a form prescribed by the Department. To be eligible for licensure in the State, all self-insured associations and MEWAs shall meet all of the following requirements in addition to those contained in Title 8 V.S.A. Chapter 101:

- A. Be licensed as a nonprofit corporation.
- B. Be established and maintained by a trade association, industry association, professional association, or by any other business group or association of any kind that has a constitution or bylaws specifically stating its purpose and have been organized and maintained in good faith for a continuous period of five years, for purposes other than obtaining or providing health care coverage benefits to its members.
- C. Be organized and maintained in good faith with at least 2,000 employees and 50 paid employer members and operated actively for a continuous period of five years.
- D. Have been operating in compliance with ERISA on a self-insured basis for a continuous period of five years pursuant to a trust agreement by a board of trustees

that shall have complete fiscal control over the association or MEWA, and that shall be responsible for all operations of the association or MEWA. The trustees shall be selected by vote of the participating employers and shall be owners, partners, officers, directors, or employees of one or more employers participating in the association or MEWA. A trustee may not be an owner, officer, or employee of the association, MEWA, or third-party administrator. The trustees shall have authority to approve applications of association members for participation in the association or MEWA and to contract with an authorized administrator or service company to administer the day-to-day affairs of the association or MEWA.

- E. Offer benefits only to association or MEWA members.
- F. Offer benefits only through licensed producers, as defined in Title 8 V.S.A. Chapter 131.
- G. Have within its own organization adequate facilities and competent personnel to serve the association or MEWA or have contracted with a licensed third-party administrator to provide those services.
- H. Have established a procedure for handling claims for benefits in the event of the dissolution of the association or MEWA.
- I. All filings made under this rule shall be submitted to:

Department of Financial Regulation
Insurance Division
Attn: Company Licensing
89 Main Street
Montpelier VT 05620-3101

Section 6. Stop Loss Insurance

The association or MEWA shall at all times maintain a stop-loss insurance policy or contract in compliance with Regulation H-2009-02 (Revised) and shall establish and maintain appropriate loss and loss adjustment reserves determined by sound actuarial principles.

Section 7. Rating Requirements

- A. An association or MEWA shall obtain rate approval annually from the Green Mountain Care Board through the rate review process provided in 8 V.S.A. §§ 4062 and 4062a. No self-insured association or MEWA may offer any plan that does not have approved rates.
- B. Any association or MEWA providing a health benefit plan shall use a community rating methodology acceptable to the Commissioner as outlined in this subsection. The association or MEWA may be rated based on the collective group experience of its members, provided that each certificate holder and dependent is charged the same community rate. The following risk classification factors are prohibited from use in rating

individual employees or employer members, and dependents of such employees or members:

1. demographic rating, including age and gender rating;
 2. geographic area rating;
 3. health status rating;
 4. industry rating;
 5. medical underwriting and screening;
 6. experience rating;
 7. tier rating (except for tiers related to family structure); and
 8. durational rating.
- C. The Commissioner may permit an association or MEWA to establish rewards, premium discounts, split benefit designs, rebates, or otherwise waive or modify applicable co-payments, deductibles, or other cost-sharing amounts in return for adherence by a member or subscriber to programs of health promotion and disease prevention that are satisfactory to the Commissioner. If such a wellness plan is integrated in the health benefit plan, approval shall occur through the SERFF product approval process, and the provisions of Section 5 shall apply to filing, licensure, and renewal. If the wellness plan is offered as a standalone program, then it must be submitted pursuant to Section 5 for approval in conjunction with licensure and renewal.
- D. An association or MEWA shall guarantee acceptance of all persons within the association or MEWA and their dependents.
- E. An association or MEWA shall guarantee the rates on all plans for a minimum of 12 months. The calendar year constitutes the plan year for all health benefit plans offered by an association or MEWA.
- F. Medical Loss Ratio. A foreign or domestic association or MEWA with covered lives in Vermont shall comply, with respect to those covered lives, with the medical loss ratio and rebating requirements of 45 C.F.R. §§ 158.210-240. Consistent with 45 C.F.R. § 158.210(a), a minimum medical loss ratio of 85 percent is required and shall be calculated consistent with the federal methodology.
- G. All expenses incurred by the association or MEWA and payable to a licensed agent, broker, or producer who is not an employee of the association or MEWA shall be incorporated into the medical loss ratio under subsection (F) of this Section and shall be incorporated in the administrative expense portion of the association or MEWA's rate filing. All expenses

incurred by the association or MEWA and payable to a licensed agent, broker, or producer—whether an employee of the association or MEWA or not—shall be reported to the Department with an explanation of how those fees are funded. If the association or MEWA utilizes an agent, broker, or producer for the sale of products including, but not limited to, a health benefit plan, the association or MEWA shall report the portion of the fee as it relates to the advertising, marketing, and sale of the health benefit plan only.

Section 8. Benefit Requirements

- A. Each health benefit plan offered by an association or MEWA shall, at a minimum, provide the following benefits:
1. Essential Health Benefits as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 18022(b)(1).
 2. Cost sharing requirements of 42 U.S.C. § 18022(c)(1), (c)(3).
 3. Lifetime and annual limits as prescribed in 29 C.F.R. § 2590.715-2711.
 4. A level of coverage equal to or greater than that designed to provide benefits that are actuarially equivalent to 60 percent of the full actuarial value of the benefits provided under the plan.
 5. The requirements of Department Regulation H-2009-03.
 6. All other insurance requirements and benefit mandates as provided in 8 V.S.A. and 18 V.S.A. Chapter 221, as may be amended from time to time, and as specified by rule by the Commissioner.
 7. All other benefits required to comply with applicable federal laws and regulations.
 8. Pediatric dental and vision coverage as required in (A)(1) of this Section may be offered to the association or MEWA in either a stand-alone dental or vision plan or as a benefit embedded in the health benefit plan.
- B. Every health benefit plan offered by an association or MEWA shall include a process for subscribers to appeal adverse benefit determinations that complies with the requirements of 8 V.S.A. § 4089f and Department Regulation H-2011-02.
- C. No health benefit plan or related policy, contract, certificate, or agreement offered or issued in this State may reserve discretion to an association or MEWA to interpret the terms of the contract or to provide standards of interpretation or review that are inconsistent with the laws of this State. Any such policy, contract, certificate, or agreement shall be null and void to the extent it conflicts with this subsection, pursuant to 8 V.S.A. § 4062f.

- D. An association or MEWA shall not deliver or issue for delivery a health benefit plan covering lives located in this State that contains an exclusion or limitation for pre-existing conditions or a waiting period on the coverage of pre-existing conditions.

Section 9. Membership Requirements

- A. An association or MEWA offering a health benefit plan in the State shall meet the requirements of 83 Fed. Reg. 28,961 (June 21, 2018) (to be codified at 29 C.F.R. § 2510.3-5(c)) , provided these standards are not implemented in a manner that is subterfuge for discrimination as is prohibited under 8 V.S.A. §§ 4062 and 4083 and 83 Fed. Reg. 28,961 (June 21, 2018) (to be codified at 29 C.F.R. § 2510.3-5(d)).
- B. An association or MEWA doing business in this State may not restrict membership to employers located within a particular geographic region of the State and shall accept employers with a principal place of business located in any part of the State.

Section 10. Filing Requirements

No policy or certificate of health insurance shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this State until a copy of the form and of the rules for the classification of risks has been filed with and approved by the Department in accordance with 8 V.S.A. §§ 3541, 4062, 4515a, 4587, or 5104.

- A. The following notice shall be provided to employers and employees who obtain coverage from an MEWA or association and shall be printed in no less than 14-point boldface type of uniform font in the policy, certificate, and/or a stand-alone notice:

“NOTICE

The association or MEWA is not an insurance company and therefore may subject employers and employees to increased financial risk. If you have questions about an association or MEWA policy or whether such a policy is right for you, you should consult your broker, a Vermont Health Connect Assister, or the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation at _____.

The Vermont Life & Health Insurance Guaranty Association does not cover policies issued by associations or MEWAs. In the event of an insolvency or dissolution of the association or MEWA you may be liable for unpaid claims and expenses.”

- B. Each notice under subsection A of this Section shall include the Department’s current consumer service telephone number and website in the blank provided in this notice.
- C. The association or MEWA shall include in its policy document the following disclosures: (1) the Vermont employer has the option of purchasing insurance on Vermont Health Connect (Exchange) and does not have to join an association or MEWA to purchase insurance; (2) purchasing an association or MEWA health benefit plan may prevent your employees from accessing premium subsidies and cost sharing reductions; (3) purchasing

an association or MEWA health benefit plan may be more expensive than purchasing a plan on Vermont Health Connect (Exchange) and may not be the most cost-effective option for the employer or its employees; and (4) the Vermont employer should understand all of its purchasing and financing options before electing insurance coverage through an association or MEWA and can contact the Vermont Office of the Healthcare Advocate for additional information.

- D. The association or MEWA shall file its advertising and marketing materials with the Department for prior approval. The association or MEWA shall be responsible for any advertising or marketing materials disseminated about its health benefit plan regardless of the source.
- E. The association or MEWA shall file policies; certificates; statement of benefits; brochures; Summary of Benefits and Coverage; any endorsement, rider, or application used in conjunction with the health benefit plan; and any other document issued in conjunction with the health benefit plan with the Department for prior approval.

Section 11. Enrollment Periods

An association or MEWA enrolling members in a health benefit plan shall comply with all open enrollment and special enrollment periods applicable to the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange).

Section 12. Financial Auditing

- A. Each association or MEWA shall file annually with the Commissioner, and with the members of the association or MEWA, within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year, an audited financial statement for the most recently completed fiscal year as supported by an independent certified public accountant's report. If the MEWA or association fails to file such audited financial statement, the Commissioner may perform the audit and the association or MEWA shall reimburse the Commissioner for the cost thereof, including, but not limited to, the cost to hire an independent auditor. An association or MEWA may request, in writing, permission from the Commissioner to submit a compilation statement or financial statement review conducted by a certified public accountant in lieu of an audited financial statement.
- B. At a minimum, the audited financial statement shall contain the following exhibits for the current and prior fiscal years:
 - 1. Balance sheet;
 - 2. Statement of income;
 - 3. Statement of changes in equity;
 - 4. Proof of minimum capital and surplus, as required pursuant to 8 V.S.A. § 3304;

5. Notes to financial statements; and
 6. Management and internal control letters.
- C. The financial statement shall be prepared in accordance with statutory accounting practices, unless the Commissioner finds an exception to statutory accounting practices is necessary to preserve the fiscal integrity of the association or MEWA.
 - D. Each association or MEWA shall file a copy of the fidelity bond, or evidence acceptable to the Commissioner, covering the administrator, the MEWA or association employees, and service agents with the audited financial statement.
 - E. The Commissioner may require any association or MEWA to file additional financial information including, but not limited to, interim financial reports, additional financial reports or exhibits, or statements considered necessary to secure complete information concerning the condition, solvency, experience, transactions, or affairs of the association or MEWA. The Commissioner shall establish reasonable deadlines for filing these additional reports, exhibits, or statements. The Commissioner may require verification of any additional required information.
 - F. An association or MEWA with covered lives in Vermont shall comply with all financial reporting requirements applicable to traditional insurance companies doing business in Vermont, including the requirement to file the Health Insurer Annual Statement (Act 152) Spreadsheet, provided for in 33 V.S.A. § 9414a. Instructions for annual filings by traditional insurance companies doing business in Vermont are set forth on the Insurance Division's webpages on the Department's website.

Section 13. Advertising and Marketing

- A. Associations, MEWAs, and insurance agents or brokers acting on behalf of an association or MEWA may advertise and market to potential customers using only marketing materials that have been submitted to and approved by the Department pursuant to Section 10 of this rule. Associations, MEWAs, and insurance agents or brokers acting on their behalf are subject to 8 V.S.A. § 4084 and all other applicable provisions of law regarding advertising and marketing practices.
- B. Using metal levels—bronze, silver, gold, and/or platinum—in the name of an association or MEWA health benefit plan, or in advertising or marketing such a plan, shall be a per se violation of 8 V.S.A. § 4084.

Section 14. Record Retention

An association or MEWA doing business in Vermont shall maintain its books and records in accordance with Department Regulation 99-01.

Section 15. Enforcement Authority

- A. To ensure compliance with the provisions of this rule and protect Vermont health care consumers, the Commissioner may, in his or her discretion, examine the business and financial affairs of an association or MEWA doing business in this State utilizing the powers granted by 8 V.S.A. §§ 13, 18, 3368-3390, 3563-3574, 4726, and other provisions of Titles 8 or 18 as may be applicable.
- B. The Commissioner may decline to issue or renew a license issued pursuant to this rule if the Commissioner finds that an association or MEWA does not satisfy any standard or requirement of this rule or any provision of other applicable State or federal law or regulation.
- C. The Commissioner may impose corrective action or suspend or revoke a license issued pursuant to this rule for a violation of this rule or any provision of applicable State and federal law.
- D. Any person or entity that violates any provision of this rule is subject to the penalties provided in Chapters 3, 101, 107, and 129 of Title 8 and such other provisions of Titles 8 or 18 as may be applicable.
- E. When the Commissioner believes that an association, MEWA, or any other person is operating in this State without being duly licensed or has violated the law, an administrative rule of the Department, or an Order of the Commissioner, the Commissioner may issue an order to cease and desist such violation or take any other action set forth in 8 V.S.A. § 3661.

Section 16. Notification to the Department by Third-Party Administrators of Contracts with Associations or MEWAs

- A. A third-party administrator shall notify the Department by December 31 of each year of all contracts it had in force at any time during the 12-month period of that calendar year that covered an association or MEWA with members having employees or subscribers in Vermont.
- B. The third-party administrator shall notify the Department within five days of any cancellation or termination of a contract that covered an association or MEWA with members having employees or subscribers in Vermont.
- C. Reporting Requirement for Fraudulent Association or MEWA Activity.
 - 1. A third-party administrator having knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that an association, MEWA, or entity holding itself out to be an association or MEWA in this State is not in compliance with the requirements of this rule shall immediately report to the Commissioner in writing regarding the identity of the entity, any known contact information and other materials, and the nature of the entity's practices triggering this reporting. This reporting obligation also requires a third-

party administrator to report to the Commissioner any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association, MEWA, or entity holding itself out to be an association or MEWA in this State without complying with the requirements of this rule.

2. Confidentiality.

- a. The documents and evidence provided pursuant to subsection (C) of this Section or obtained by the Commissioner in an investigation of suspected or actual conduct in violation of this rule shall be privileged and confidential, shall not be made public, and shall not be subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in any private civil action pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 317(c)(26) and 8 V.S.A. § 3574.
- b. Subdivision (a) of this subsection does not prohibit release by the Commissioner of documents and evidence obtained in an investigation of suspected or actual conduct in violation of this rule:
 - i. in administrative or judicial proceedings to enforce laws administered by the Commissioner;
 - ii. to federal, state, or local law enforcement or regulatory agencies, to an organization established for the purpose of detecting and preventing such conduct; or
 - iii. at the Commissioner's discretion in the furtherance of legal or regulatory proceedings brought as part of the Commissioner's official duties or to civil or criminal law enforcement authorities for use in the exercise of such authority's duties, in such manner as the Commissioner may deem proper.
- c. Release of documents and evidence under subdivision (b) of this subsection does not abrogate or modify the privilege granted in subdivision (a) of this subsection.

Section 17. Insurance Agents and Brokers

- A. Any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, a broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association or MEWA to a Vermont employer or a Vermont resident shall notify the Commissioner in writing prior to engaging in any conduct in connection with such sale. This written notification shall include, at a minimum, the person's name, address, telephone number, and email address; the name of the association or MEWA; and all materials in the person's possession used for the purposes of soliciting, offering, or selling the health benefit plan, including advertising and marketing materials.

- B. Prior to completing a sale, any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, a broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association or MEWA to a Vermont employer or a Vermont resident shall disclose to the employer or resident that he/she is being compensated for the sale of the health benefit plan, that the employer or resident has the option of purchasing insurance on the Exchange, that purchasing such a health benefit plan may prevent the employer or individual from accessing premium subsidies and cost sharing reductions, and that purchasing such a health benefit plan may be more expensive than purchasing a plan on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange). Any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, a broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association or MEWA to a Vermont employer or a Vermont resident shall also provide the employer or resident with a crosswalk of benefits comparing the association or MEWA health benefit plan with plans offered on the Vermont Health Connect (Exchange). As noted in Section 5, this crosswalk of benefits must be submitted to the Department for approval, either through SERFF or as part of the licensure and renewal process.
- C. A person, including a licensed agent, broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association or MEWA to a Vermont employer or a Vermont resident, prior to engaging in or assisting any person to engage in offering an association or MEWA health benefit plan, shall carry out and document appropriate due diligence to establish, at a minimum, the following:
- a. That the association or MEWA is licensed in the State;
 - b. That the disclosures listed in subsection (B) are in the policy document; and
 - c. That the advertising and marketing materials he/she is using have been approved by the Department.
- D. Reporting Requirement for Fraudulent Association or MEWA Activity. Any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, a broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association, MEWA, or entity holding itself out to be an association or MEWA, having knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that an association, MEWA, or entity holding itself out to be an association or MEWA in this State is not in compliance with the requirements of this rule shall immediately report to the Commissioner in writing regarding the identity of the entity, any known contact information or other materials, and the nature of the entity's practices triggering this reporting. This reporting obligation also requires such person to report to the Commissioner any person, including a licensed or unlicensed agent, a broker, or other individual, soliciting, offering, or selling a health benefit plan on behalf of an association, MEWA, or entity holding itself out to be an association or MEWA in this State without complying with the requirements of this rule. The confidentiality provisions of Section 16(C)(2) shall apply to this subsection.

Section 18. Severability

If any provision of this rule, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this rule that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to that end the provisions of this rule are severable.