

249A.6 Lien.

1. When payment is made by the department for medical care or expenses through the medical assistance program on behalf of a recipient, the department shall have a lien, to the extent of those payments, upon all monetary claims which the recipient may have against third parties. A lien under this section is not effective unless the department files a notice of lien with the clerk of the district court in the county where the recipient resides and with the recipient's attorney when the recipient's eligibility for medical assistance is established. The notice of lien shall be filed before the third party has concluded a final settlement with the recipient, the recipient's attorney, or other representative. The third party shall obtain a written determination from the department concerning the amount of the lien before a settlement is deemed final for purposes of this section. A compromise, including but not limited to a settlement, waiver or release, of a claim under this section does not defeat the department's lien except pursuant to the written agreement of the director or the director's designee. A settlement, award, or judgment structured in any manner not to include medical expenses or an action brought by a recipient or on behalf of a recipient which fails to state a claim for recovery of medical expenses does not defeat the department's lien if there is any recovery on the recipient's claim.

2. The department shall be given notice of monetary claims against third parties as follows:

a. Applicants for medical assistance shall notify the department of any possible claims against third parties upon submitting the application. Recipients of medical assistance shall notify the department of any possible claims when those claims arise.

b. A person who provides health care services to a person receiving assistance through the medical assistance program shall notify the department whenever the person has reason to believe that third parties may be liable for payment of the costs of those health care services.

c. An attorney representing an applicant for or recipient of assistance on a claim upon which the department has a lien under this section shall notify the department of the claim of which the attorney has actual knowledge, prior to filing a claim, commencing an action or negotiating a settlement offer. Actual knowledge under this section shall include the notice to the attorney pursuant to subsection 1.

The mailing and deposit in a United States post office or public mailing box of the notice, addressed to the department at its state or district office location, is adequate legal notice of the claim.

3. The department's lien is valid and binding on an attorney, insurer, or other third party only upon notice by the department or unless the attorney, insurer, or third party has actual notice that the recipient is receiving medical assistance from the department and only to the extent to which the attorney, insurer, or third party has not made payment to the recipient or an assignee of the recipient prior to the notice. Payment of benefits by an insurer or third party pursuant to the rights of the lienholder in this section discharges the attorney, insurer, or third party from liability to the recipient or the recipient's assignee to the extent of the payment to the department.

4. If a recipient of assistance through the medical assistance program incurs the obligation to pay attorney fees and court costs for the purpose of enforcing a monetary claim upon which the department has a lien under this section, upon the receipt of the judgment or settlement of the total claim, of which the lien for medical assistance payments is a part, the court costs and reasonable attorney fees shall first be deducted from this total judgment or settlement. One-third of the remaining balance shall then be deducted and paid to the recipient. From the remaining balance, the lien of the department shall be paid. Any amount remaining shall be paid to the recipient. An attorney acting on behalf of a recipient of medical assistance for the purpose of enforcing a claim upon which the department has a lien shall not collect from the recipient any amount as attorney fees which is in excess of the amount which the attorney customarily would collect on claims not subject to this section.

5. For purposes of this section the term "*third party*" includes an attorney, individual, institution, corporation, or public or private agency which is or may be liable to pay part or all of the medical costs incurred as a result of injury, disease or disability by or on behalf of an applicant for or recipient of assistance under the medical assistance program.

6. The department may enforce its lien by a civil action against any liable third party.

[C79, 81, § 249A.6]

83 Acts, ch 120, § 1; 83 Acts, ch 153, § 15; 89 Acts, ch 111, § 1; 93 Acts, ch 180, §50; 94 Acts, ch 1023, §89