

DHSS cyber attack impacts more than 100,000 Alaska households



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ANCHORAGE (KTUU) — A cyber attack has impacted more than 100,000 Alaska households.

The Department of Health and Social Services says the breach applies to people who applied for programs through the Division of Public Assistance. That's a long list of programs, but a few examples would include Medicaid, SNAP, senior benefits, and disabilities related to Medicaid and adult public assistance.

DHSS sent out letters to 100,000 households, although numerous people within the house may have had their information compromised.

"I think it's important to reassure folks that every step that we can possibly take to prevent this kind of happening has been put in place," Shawnda O'Brien, the director of the Division of Public Assistance, said, "but unfortunately there are some viruses we just aren't able to be prepared for."

O'Brien says the cyber attacks were from April 26 through the 30.

"We are working very hard in conjunction with the State of Alaska, Office of Information Technology and the FBI to further fortify and secure the statewide area network to protect against hackers penetrating our systems," the letter reads.

In June, DHSS notified the public of a HIPAA and APIPA breach, disclosing that on April 26, a Dept. of Public Assistance computer was infected with a Zeus/Zbot Trojan virus that was discovered on April 30. At the time, it was believed that the information of around 500 Alaskans had been compromised.

[Related: Alaska DHSS data stolen in April hack]

A preliminary investigation found that the virus bypassed multiple layers of security, and that the infected computer — which stored confidential documents on DPA clients — interacted with Russia-based IP addresses.



The attacker was able to access names, social security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, health information, benefit information and other personal information such as income.

"We haven't gotten any indication that it's been used for anything, so really the notification is just to protect folks in case they feel like maybe something has happened with their personal information," O'Brien said.

For anyone with questions about their personal or medical information you can call 1-888-484-9355 or email PrivacyOfficial@alaska.gov.

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