

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

December 22, 2023 – Clay County has begun notifying individuals who currently receive or have received social services from Clay County and certain other Minnesota county social service entities, and/or their household members, that their protected health information and/or personally identifiable information was acquired without authorization during a recent cyber attack.

On October 27, 2023, Clay County determined that its network had been impacted by a ransomware attack that affected the electronic document management system (“CaseWorks”), which is hosted by Clay County and used by other Minnesota County social services entities. Clay County immediately initiated its incident response process and began working with its local information technology partner to investigate, to securely restore operations, and determine the effects of the incident. Clay County also worked with a nationally recognized digital forensics firm to assist with the investigation and notified federal law enforcement and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Through the investigation, Clay County determined that there was unauthorized access to its network between October 23, 2023 and October 26, 2023, and that the cyber criminals responsible for this attack took some data belonging to certain county social service entities from Clay County’s network. As soon as Clay County learned this, it started notifying the impacted counties and began an extensive review to determine what information may have been involved and who may have been affected, so that it could provide notice. Although that review is ongoing, Clay County is providing notice to the identified impacted individuals.

Clay County is providing notice on behalf of the following county social service entities: Big Stone County Family Services, Clay County Social Services, Pennington County Human Services, Scott County Health and Human Services, Stevens County Human Services, Traverse County Social Services, Western Prairie Human Services, and Wilkin County Health & Human Services. Based upon its investigation the affected data varied, but included an individual’s name, together with some or all of the following kinds of information: Social Security number, address, date of birth, information regarding services provided to the individual by the social services entity, such as locations of service, dates of service, client identification number or unique identifiers related to services provided to individuals, insurance identification number, and/or insurance or billing information.

As a precautionary measure, Clay County urged potentially impacted individuals to take appropriate steps to protect their personal information by remaining vigilant to the possibility of fraud and identity theft by reviewing and monitoring any account statements, free credit reports and health insurance Explanation of Benefits (EOB) forms for unauthorized or suspicious activity. If an individual’s Social Security number or driver’s license was involved, Clay County is offering credit monitoring services at no cost to the affected individual. Clay County indicated that any unauthorized or suspicious activity should be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities, including local law enforcement. In addition, consistent with its compliance obligations and responsibilities, Clay County is providing notice of this incident to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and all appropriate state regulators.

“The privacy and security of the information we maintain for Clay County and other Minnesota Counties is very important to us, and we remain committed to doing everything we can to maintain the confidentiality of such information,” stated Clay County Administrator, Stephen Larson. “Clay County wants to make sure an incident like this does not happen again, so it has taken a number of steps to change the way it protects the information maintained in the CaseWorks application, and has enhanced its security procedures,” stated Stephen Larson.