

# Fact Sheet



U.S. Department of Labor  
Employee Benefits Security Administration

## The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA)

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits discrimination in group health plan coverage based on genetic information.

**Builds on HIPAA's protections.** GINA expands the genetic information protections included in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Before the Affordable Care Act, HIPAA prevented a plan or issuer from imposing a preexisting condition exclusion based solely on genetic information. Under the Affordable Care Act, plans are prohibited from excluding coverage or benefits due to any preexisting condition. HIPAA continues to prohibit discrimination in eligibility, benefits, or premiums based on a health factor (including genetic information).

**Additional underwriting protections.** GINA provides that group health plans cannot adjust premiums or contribution amounts for a plan, or a group of similarly situated individuals under the plan, based on genetic information of one or more individuals in the group. (However, premiums may be increased for the group based upon the manifestation of a disease or disorder of an individual enrolled in the plan.)

**Prohibits requiring genetic testing.** GINA generally prohibits plans and issuers from requesting or requiring an individual to undergo a genetic test. However, a health care professional providing health care services to an individual is permitted to request a genetic test. A plan or issuer may request the results of a genetic test to determine payment of a claim for benefits, but only the minimum amount of information necessary in order to determine payment. There is also a research exception that permits a plan or issuer under certain conditions to request (but not require) that a participant or beneficiary undergo a genetic test.

**Restricts collection of genetic information.** GINA prohibits plans from collecting genetic information (including family medical history) from an individual prior to or in connection with enrollment in the plan, or at any time for underwriting purposes. Thus, under GINA, plans and issuers are generally prohibited from offering rewards in return for the provision of genetic information, including family medical history information collected as part of a Health Risk Assessment (HRA).

GINA includes an exception for incidental collection of genetic information, provided the information is not used for underwriting purposes. However, the GINA regulations make clear that the incidental collection exception is not available if it is reasonable for the plan or issuer to anticipate that health information will be received in response to a collection, unless the collection explicitly states that genetic information should not be provided.

**Other protections.** GINA also contains individual insurance market provisions, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, privacy and confidentiality provisions, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights, and employment-related provisions, administered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act](#) on the EBSA Website.