Section 4. Promotion of Information-Oriented Society

1. Promotion of Information-Oriented Society

Based on the "New IT Reform Strategy" formulated in January 2006 the government formulated a "Priority Policy Program - 2007" in July 2007 to become "the world's most advanced IT nation within 5 years" and has been implementing various measures to achieve this goal.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has been making efforts for IT-based reformation in the areas of medical care, employment/labour, and administrative services using these strategies.

2. Major Efforts for Promoting Information Utilization

(1) Promotion of IT Utilization in the Areas of Health, Labour and Welfare

1) Information utilization in medical care/health care

In the areas of medical care/health care, IT can be utilized in providing more efficient health care/medical care, securing safety, and improving quality. Hence efforts are being made to utilize IT in promoting cooperation between medical institutions, establishing an online receipt system, and providing health information. With the online receipt system in particular, in order to make the office work involved in health care insurance more efficient, receipts submitted by medical institutions to examination and payment organizations and those submitted by examination and payment organizations to insurers have been provided online since FY 2006. Efforts are being made to have all the receipts in principle, be provided online with respect paid to protecting personal information.

2) Information utilization in nursing care and welfare

In the areas of nursing care and welfare, efforts are being made to develop life support devices and support working at home, utilizing IT, to improve the quality of welfare services and self-sufficiency support of the elderly and people with disabilities. Discussions will commence on the introduction of IT/information education in training courses for related national certification. In addition, utilization of long-term care insurance receipt data will be effectively promoted in providing more advanced and high quality nursing care services as well as to prevent the need for nursing care.

3) Cross-sectional information utilization in medical care/health care/nursing care/welfare

The "New IT Reform Strategy" provided a grand design for information utilization by indicating plans for cross-sectional information utilization in the areas of medical care/health

care/nursing care/welfare, with concrete action plans to have been formulated by the end of FY 2006. In response to this the "Grand Design for Information Utilization in Medical Care, Health Care, Nursing Care, and Welfare Sectors" was decided upon and published on March 27, 2007. This design gives a future view of medical care/health care/nursing care/welfare utilizing IT. It also provides action plans for measures/business that the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare should implement in approximately 5 years, from FY 2006, and taking the future view into consideration.

More concretely, the content of the action plans includes ① measures for information-oriented medical care in such as providing certain views on moving paperless and standardization for written description of the various forms used in medical care and definitions for the forms, ② measures for an online receipt system such as making receipt request procedures between medical institutions (including pharmacies) and examination and payment organizations completely online in principle, ③ measures for collecting/utilizing health information electronically throughout life cycle such as providing standard health check-up items and a standard data format, and ④ measures for information-oriented nursing care and welfare such as starting to discuss the verification/review items on the current adjustment system of long-term care insurance services.

Efforts will be made in the future to implement measures in accordance with these action plans as steadily and as early as possible.

4) Introduction of social security cards (tentative name)

(Background)

Decided in the "Restoring Trust in Pension Records and Establishing New Pension Record Management System", compiled by the government and ruling parties on July 5, 2007, Social Security Cards (tentative name) which can ① serve as pension handbooks, health insurance certificates, and long-term care insurance certificates and ② enable verification of pension records, etc. safely and promptly at home will be introduced in FY 2011.

In response, "Study Group on Social Security Cards (tentative name)" consisting of experts has been held by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to discuss a basic system design for Social Security Cards (tentative name) and a "Report on Basic Design of Social Security Cards (tentative name)" was compiled in January 2008.

(Summary of the report)

① Realize improved accessibility for users and more efficient office work for insurers and service providers through introduction of the Card (see Figure 11-4-1).

② Eliminate anxiety over violation of privacy and centralized control of information through adopting high-security IC cards, storing the minimum information needed on the cards,

implementing security measures for the identification information, and discussing possible usage restrictions according to the information stored on the cards.

③ Fully utilize systems related to Social Security Cards (tentative name) to make it more cost-effective, such as an online receipt system and a system for issuing basic resident register cards etc.

Figure 11-4-1. Major Effects to be Realized through Introduction of the Cards

Major Effects to be Realized through Introduction of the Card	
❍ Pension handbooks, health insurance certificates, and long-term care insurance certificates can be integrated into a single card.	• As people will only need one card, it will be easier for them to keep them safe and carry them around. The work load of issuing insurance certificates will be reduced. • Information currently recorded on insurance certificates can be stored in IC chips resulting in better privacy protection. • There will be no need to re-acquire insurance certificates in the event of changing insurers due to moving or changing jobs. • The work load will be reduced because certification will be verified immediately at the reception desks of medical institutions and posting mistaken information on insurance certificates will no longer take place.. • As individual people can be identified between multiple systems or insurers, the workload of adjusting parallel payments between systems will be reduced.
❍ People can verify the accuracy of their pension records at any time safely and promptly from PCs at home	• Strict authentication will be implemented online to prevent impersonations. • People can view their health information, including the results of specialized checkups.
❍ Others	• Upon request they can be used as identification cards.

(Future discussions)

Further discussions will be made on a concrete system in order that people will argue about Social Security Cards more concretely and widely trough clarifying alternatives, including costs (see Figure 11-4-2).

Figure 11-4-2. Image of the Basic Design of Social Security Card (tentative name)
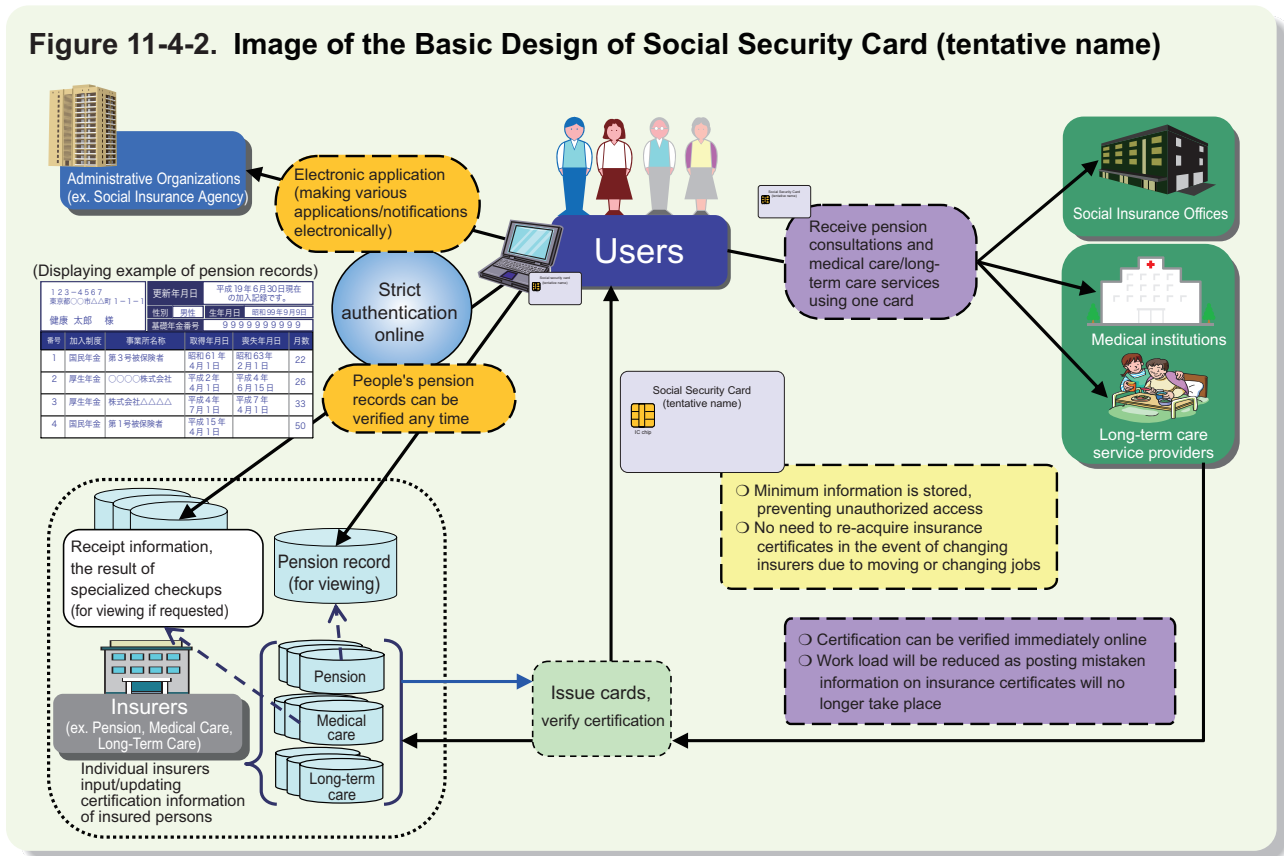
5) Information utilization in employment/labour

In the areas of employment/labour efforts will continue to be made to improve user services such as improving my page/mail distribution services on "job-net", an employment information system provided in cooperation with the government and the private sector in which people can obtain job opening information easily through the internet or cellular phones.

(2) Promotion of IT Utilization in Administrative Services

In the area of administrative services nearly all procedures, except for those that require interviews, are accepted online for 24 hours 365 days a year. In the "New IT Reform Strategy" the goal was set if increasing the percentage of online use for applications/notifications to the government and local governments to 50% or more by FY 2010. In order to achieve this goal, measures are being taken in accordance with the "Action Plans for Promoting Online Use" formulated on March 2006. "Emergency Promotion Measures for Online Use/Electronic Applications in Health, Labour and Welfare Administration" were formulated in January 2008 and the acceptance point for online applications transferred to the main entrance of electronic government (e-Gov). In order to improve accessibility and realize simplified efficient administrative operations through utilization of IT, the "Plans for Optimizing Work/System" were formulated for

work in social security and labour insurance in March 2006 and for works in the Center for Cancer Control and Information Services in June the same year. At present efforts are being made to optimize both the work and the systems.

Regarding inquiries for information on National Pension and Employees' Pension participation, a system utilizing the ID/password authentication that is widely used in internet banking for strict identity verification and to enable prompt replies over the internet had been established by the end of March 2006, further increasing its speed.

3. Protection of Personal Information

In response to enforcement of the "Act on the Protection of Personal Information" (fully enforced on April 1, 2005), guidelines in the areas of health, labour and welfare administration were formulated according to the actual situation in those areas.

After full enforcement of the act public awareness on personal information has developed, although there have been some "excessive reactions" due to misinterpretations of the law where preparation of various name lists was discontinued or business operators handling personal information refused to make the information available to families in the case of emergencies, including large-scale disasters and accidents.

In consideration of above, the government decided to clarify the interpretation of the law and operation standards, review the guidelines as required, and make them well known among public business operators in coping with the "excessive reactions" in February 2006. In response to this, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reviewed the "Guidelines for Proper Handling of Personal Information by Medical Care/Nursing Care Service Providers" in April 2006 (refer to Figure 11-4-3).

Figure 11-4-3. Guidelines for Protection of Personal Information

Areas	Descriptions
Medical research	Ethical guidelines for human genome/genetic analysis research (announced on Dec. 28, 2004)
	Ethical guidelines for epidemiologic studies (announced on Dec. 28, 2004)
	Guidelines for clinical research on gene therapy (announced on Dec. 28, 2004)
	Ethical guidelines for clinical research (announced on Dec. 28, 2004)
	Guidelines for clinical research using human stem cells (announced on July 3, 2006)
Medical care	Guidelines for proper handling of personal information in medical care/nursing care service providers (notified on Dec. 24, 2004, reviewed on April 21, 2006)
	Guidelines for proper handling of personal information by the Health Insurance Society (notified on Dec. 27, 2004)
	Guidelines for proper handling of personal information by the National Health Insurance Society (notified on April 1, 2005)
	Guidelines for safety management of medical information systems (notified on March 31, 2004, reviewed on March 30, 2007)
Employment management	Guidelines for measures to be taken by relevant service providers in appropriately handling the personal information of employment management (announced on July 1, 2004)
	Requirements for handling the personal health information fromamong employment management information (notified on Oct. 29, 2004)
Welfare	Guidelines for proper handling of personal information by welfare service providers (notified on Nov. 30, 2004)
Job placement/ worker dispatching	Guidelines for job placement agencies, recruiters, contracted recruiters, and worker dispatching service providers to comply with the conditions for equal treatment, clarification of working conditions, proper handling of the personal information of job applicants, the responsibilities of job placement agencies, and adequate notification of recruitment conditions (announced on Nov. 4, 2004)
	Guidelines for the measures to be taken by worker dispatching business operators (announced on Nov. 4, 2004)
Labour unions	Guidelines for the measures to be taken by labour unions into securing thee proper handling of personal information (announced on March 25, 2005)
Corporate pensions	Guidelines for proper handling of the personal information inon corporate pensions (notified on Oct. 1, 2004)