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Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter No.: I 15-32

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY MEDI-CAL PROGRAM SPECIALISTS/LIAISONS

SUBJECT: Access to Medi-Cal Benefits for College Students

The purpose of this letter is to remind counties of the policy for processing changes of address for students who attend college in a county other than their primary county of responsibility. With schools resuming in the fall, counties may begin experiencing an increase in questions from families who want to ensure their child has access to Medi-Cal services when the child moves to a different county to attend college.

When a family informs the county that the Medi-Cal beneficiary attends college outside of the family's residence county, the county should update only the student's address and enter the new residence county information into the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) and the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS). This will trigger the discontinuation of the student's current health plan in the family's residence county and distribution of new health plan enrollment information to the student in the new county. During the new health plan selection and enrollment process in the new county, students can continue to use the same Benefits Identification Card to obtain health care services and can have access to Fee for Service Medi-Cal until the new health plan enrollment is completed.

If the family reports the child is back in the home for a school break and requires medical attention in the primary county of responsibility, the county is reminded to update the student's address to reflect the appropriate county in SAWS and MEDS using the process mentioned above.

Attached is a listing of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has developed to assist Medi-Cal families in maintaining access to care for their child who is attending college in a different county. The link to these FAQs can be found on the DHCS website at:

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<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Pages/StudentFAQ.aspx> .

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact  
Ms. Lisa Jackson at (916) 552-8429 or email at [Lisa.Jackson@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:Lisa.Jackson@dhcs.ca.gov). or  
Ms. Guadalupe Sanchez at (916) 341-7360 or email [Guadalupe.Sanchez@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:Guadalupe.Sanchez@dhcs.ca.gov).

Original Signed by Clarissa Wade for

Alice Mak, Chief (Acting)  
Medi-Cal Eligibility Director

Attachment

# Access to Medi-Cal Benefits for College Students

## Frequently Asked Questions

***My child is enrolled in Medi-Cal and will attend college in a different county. Does he/she need to apply for Medi-Cal in that county?*** No, there is no need for a new Medi-Cal application as long as the child is still under 21 years of age, is only temporarily out of the home and is still claimed as your tax dependent in the household.

***What do I need to do to continue my child's Medi-Cal health plan enrollment when my son/daughter is attending college in another county from where I reside?*** You should notify your local county social services office that your son/daughter is temporarily moving to attend college and provide the child's address in the new county. The county will update the case records with the new address and county code in the State's database for your child.

*In the County Organized Health Systems (COHS) counties, everyone is enrolled in the same health care plan and no additional plan selection is needed. Enrollment is automatic and usually occurs as of the first day of the month after the address change for the student has been processed. (COHS counties include the following: Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Orange, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Trinity, Ventura and Yolo.)*

*In counties where enrollment is not automatic, Health Care Options will mail the health plan enrollment information to your son/daughter's new address explaining the health plan options available to them in the new county of residence. If your child does not choose a new health plan during a specified time period of up to 45 days, your child will be defaulted into a plan effective the first day of the following month.*

*In order to prevent a delay in the new health plan enrollment, your child should contact Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263 for assistance with health plan enrollment.*

***Can my son/daughter stay in the same health plan and receive services in the new county?*** He or she may stay in the same plan if that plan is available in the new county where your child will attend college. Since health plans are county-specific, you will have to check which counties your child's current health plan operates in.

*For a listing of the health plans available to your child in each county, you may go to the [Medi-Cal Managed Care Health Plan Directory](#)*

*For additional questions and in order to prevent a delay in the new health plan enrollment, your child should contact Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263 for assistance with their enrollment.*

**Will my son/daughter still be covered for health care services while selecting a new health plan?** Yes, while your child is selecting a new health plan, he/she will be covered under Fee-For-Service (also called Regular Medi-Cal) and should continue to use the same Benefits Identification Card. Under Fee-For-Service Medi-Cal, your child may see any Medi-Cal provider that accepts Fee-For-Service Medi-Cal in any county.

In order to prevent a delay in their new health plan enrollment, your child should contact Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263 for assistance with their enrollment into a plan in the new county.

**Can my son/daughter still have access to mental health services after moving but before they have selected a health plan in their new county of residence?** When your child is enrolled in a health plan in your residence county and moves to a new county, the health plan information will be updated after the changes are processed in the system. During this transition time, the health plan in your child's original residence county is responsible for covering out-of-network services until your child is enrolled in a health plan in his/her new county of residence. Those services include mental health services to address your child's mild to moderate mental health impairment. Call your current health plan to learn how to obtain these out-of-network services.

*If your child is temporarily covered under Medi-Cal Fee-For-Service before being enrolled in a new health plan, and he/she is not getting Specialty Mental Health Services but needs mental health services for a mild to moderate level of impairment, your child is able to obtain those services through a Fee-For-Service mental health provider.*

*If your child is receiving Specialty Mental Health Services from your residence county Mental Health Plan (MHP), your child should seek services from the MHP in their new county of residence. Every county has a Mental Health Department (which operates the MHP) and a 24-Hour Crisis line available. Click on the following links for additional information:*

*<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MHPContaktList.aspx>*

*[http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/County\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Crisis\\_Numbers\\_CM\\_HDA\\_04182013\\_ADA.pdf](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/County_Mental_Health_Crisis_Numbers_CM_HDA_04182013_ADA.pdf)*

*The DHCS Mental Health Ombudsman is available to provide assistance with accessing Medi-Cal specialty mental health services. Click on the following link*

for additional information:

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/MHOmbudsmanSrvcs.aspx>.

*In addition, colleges and universities typically provide mental health services through their health care clinics. Students or parents should contact the college or university's student health center for more information about available services and any associated costs.*

**Can my child access health care services when he/she returns home from school, or is on a school break?** *During a school break, students returning home can use the process described above to obtain mental health services in the county without having to change the address for the school break. If your child is returning home for a summer or winter break and expects to access routine services during that time, you will need to follow the same process to update your child's address with the county social services office and select a health plan in your county of residence. In turn, you will need to contact the county and update your child's address when he/she returns back to school. Should your child need emergency services during the school break, emergency services are available to all Medi-Cal beneficiaries statewide regardless of county of residence.*

**What if my child decides to remain living in the county where he/she attends college?** *If your child chooses to reside permanently away from your home, you must advise your county social services office of this change.*

**We do not want to change our child's health plan when they move to the new county. Is my son/daughter able to obtain all health services in the other county with his/her current health plan card?** *No, if a child chooses not to change health plans from the family residence county when attending college in a different county, he/she will only be able to access emergency room services in the new county. For routine or preventive health care, the child would need to use the health plan's regular network of providers located in the county of residence for the family. Exception: He or she may stay in the same plan only if that plan is available in the new county where your child will attend college as described above.*

**My son/daughter will attend college out of state. Will he/she be covered by Medi-Cal for all health care needs while away from home?** *No. Medi-Cal will only cover limited services such as emergency room services. You should contact your county social services office and inform them if your child moves out of state. He/she will need to apply for affordable health care such as Medicaid in the new state where the college is located to have access to full health care coverage. It is important to note that different states have different eligibility criteria for Medicaid. Therefore, just because your child may be eligible for Medicaid in California does not necessarily mean they will be eligible for Medicaid in the new state.*