



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Care Services



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

DATE: December 12, 2022

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 22-060
[Supersedes MHSUDS Information Notice No: 18-043](#)

TO: California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators
California Association of Alcohol & Drug Program Executives, Inc.
California Association of DUI Treatment Programs
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California Hospital Association
California Opioid Maintenance Providers
California State Association of Counties
Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Associations
County Behavioral Health Directors
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
County Drug & Alcohol Administrators

SUBJECT: Mental Health Plan and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System
Beneficiary Handbook Requirements and Templates

PURPOSE: This Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) informs county
Mental Health Plans (MHPs) and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery
System (DMC-ODS) counties of the updated requirements related to
the beneficiary handbooks. The MHP and DMC-ODS beneficiary
handbook templates are included as enclosures.

REFERENCE: [42 CFR § 438.10](#); [BHIN 21-073](#); [BHIN 21-075](#); [BHIN 22-011](#);
[BHIN 22-019](#); [Welf. & Inst. Code § 14184.102\(d\)](#)

BACKGROUND:

MHPs and DMC-ODS counties are required to distribute beneficiary handbooks under the 2016 Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Managed Care Final Rule (Final Rule), which aimed to align the Medicaid managed care regulations with

requirements for other major sources of coverage.¹ The 2016 Final Rule stipulates the requirements for the format, content, and distribution of beneficiary handbooks.

The updated MHP and DMC-ODS beneficiary handbook templates are included as enclosures to this information notice (Enclosures 1 and 2, respectively). The MHP and DMC-ODS beneficiary handbook templates have been updated to align with the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) behavioral health initiatives that became effective in January 2022 and July 2022. These initiatives include the criteria for beneficiary access criteria to Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) ([BHIN 21-073](#)), DMC-ODS program requirements ([BHIN 21-075](#)), behavioral health documentation requirements ([BHIN 22-019](#)), and the No Wrong Door policy ([BHIN 22-011](#)).

To the extent that there is a conflict between the MHP contract, DMC contract, or the DMC-ODS Intergovernmental Agreement terms and this BHIN, the policy contained within the BHIN supersedes the contract terms.

POLICY:

In accordance with 42 CFR § 438.10, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties must provide each beneficiary with a handbook at the time the beneficiary first accesses services. The beneficiary handbook will be considered to be provided to the beneficiary if the MHP:

- Mails a printed copy of the beneficiary handbook to the beneficiary's mailing address;
- Provides the beneficiary handbook by email after obtaining the beneficiary's agreement to receive it by email; and/or
- Posts the beneficiary handbook on the MHP and DMC-ODS County's website² and advises the beneficiary in paper or electronic form that the beneficiary handbook is available on the internet, including the applicable internet address, provided that beneficiaries with disabilities who cannot access this information online are provided auxiliary aids and services upon request at no cost; and/or
- Provides the beneficiary handbook by any other method that can reasonably be expected to result in the beneficiary receiving the information.

¹ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10

² Title 42 CFR part 438.10

Regardless of the method of distribution of the beneficiary handbook, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties shall post the beneficiary handbook on the MHP and DMC-ODS County's website in a manner that is readily accessible.³

If counties offer both SMHS and DMC-ODS, the counties shall make both handbooks available. MHPs and DMC-ODS counties must also provide additional handbooks upon request. The MHP and DMC-ODS county must also give each beneficiary notice of any significant change^{4,5} to the information contained in the MHP or DMC-ODS beneficiary handbook at least 30 days before the intended effective date of the change⁶. Templates for the MHP and DMC-ODS beneficiary handbooks (Enclosure 1 and 2, respectively), Language Taglines (Enclosure 3), and the Nondiscrimination Notice (Enclosure 4) are included as enclosures to this BHIN. Enclosures 3 and 4 shall be combined with each beneficiary handbook. The content of the MHP and DMC-ODS beneficiary handbook templates includes information that enables the beneficiary to understand how to effectively access services and list all federally required informing elements for beneficiary handbooks⁷. The templates indicate fields where the MHP or DMC-ODS county should insert county-specific information, and MHPs and DMC-ODS counties will need to edit the template to add their county-specific information where indicated in the template.

COMPLIANCE:

Effective 90 calendar days from the date of publication of this BHIN, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties shall implement the beneficiary handbook policies established above, ensure compliance with this policy, and provide updated handbooks to beneficiaries. In addition, for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 annual compliance monitoring activities only, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties shall submit updated beneficiary handbooks (including English and all applicable threshold languages) and a copy of the 30-day beneficiary notice of significant change to the DHCS County/Provider Operations and Monitoring Branch (CPOMB) via the MOVEit secure file transfer protocol by March 12, 2023.

³ Readily accessible means electronic information and services which comply with modern accessibility standards such as section 508 guidelines, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA and successor versions.

⁴ A change is considered significant when there is an increase or decrease in the amount or types of services that are available, or if there is an increase or decrease in the number of network providers, or if there is any other change that would impact the benefits available through the MHP.

⁵ Subsection (f) of section 1810.360 of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations is superseded.

⁶ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(g)(4)

⁷ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10 (g)

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CPOMB Liaisons will confirm receipt of the submitted handbook within 15 business days of submission and will follow-up with MHP and/or DMC-ODS county if the documents are missing and/or need to be resubmitted. Upon review, CPOMB Liaison will communicate any missing beneficiary handbook requirements to MHPs and DMC-ODS counties. Liaisons will provide technical assistance to MHPs and DMC-ODS counties to ensure compliance with the policies established above.

Please contact countysupport@dhcs.ca.gov for questions regarding this BHIN or its enclosures.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Ivan Bhardwaj, Acting Chief
Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division

Enclosures (4)