

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

**NOTICE OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST**

**RELEASE DATE: July 31, 2020**

**PROPOSED 12-MONTH EXTENSION REQUEST TO THE MEDI-CAL 1915(b)  
SPECIALTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WAIVER**

This notice provides information of public interest regarding a proposed 12-month extension request to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Medi-Cal 1915(b) Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) waiver by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). The 1915(b) waiver was initially approved by CMS to be effective from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2020. On May 8, 2020, DHCS requested an 18-month SMHS waiver extension and on June 2, 2020, CMS approved a 6-month extension acknowledging that DHCS could request another 12-month extension in the future. Based on the 6-month extension granted by CMS, the current SMHS waiver is effective through December 31, 2020.

Following the end of the current waiver period on December 31, 2020, DHCS intended to implement California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM), a multi-year initiative to implement overarching policy changes across all Medi-Cal delivery systems, including the consolidation of Medi-Cal managed care along with the SMHS program and the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System under a single 1915(b) waiver. However, COVID-19 and the ongoing Public Health Emergency has greatly impacted all aspects of California's health care delivery system, and key partners and stakeholders including managed care plans, providers, and counties requested a delay in implementing CalAIM to focus on addressing the pandemic.

While the goals and objectives of CalAIM continue to be a high priority, DHCS officially announced in May 2020 that the start of CalAIM would be delayed by one year, to be effective on January 1, 2022. As a result, DHCS will submit a request to CMS to extend the current 1915(b) waiver by 12-months to ensure continuation of the SMHS program during calendar year 2021 and to align with the revised effective date start of CalAIM.

DHCS is requesting CMS' approval to extend the term of the current 1915(b) waiver through December 31, 2021, under the same terms and conditions as are approved today. All proposed extension requests are subject to CMS approval.

DHCS requests input from counties, health plans, providers, beneficiaries, and other interested stakeholders concerning the proposed 1915(b) waiver 12-month extension request.

## PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS

DHCS requests input from counties, health plans, providers, beneficiaries, and other interested stakeholders concerning the proposed 1915(b) waiver 12-month extension request.

As previously noticed, DHCS will host the following tribal consultation meeting to solicit stakeholder comments. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to maximize opportunities for participation, this meeting will be held via webinar.

- Wednesday, July 29, 2020 – DHCS Tribal and Designees of Indian Health Programs
  - 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
  - For more information visit the Indian Health Program [webpage](#)

Written comments may be sent to the following address:

Department of Health Care Services  
Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division  
Attn: Andrea Moore  
P.O. Box 997413, MS 2702  
Sacramento, California 95899-7417

Comments may also be emailed to [MCBHD@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:MCBHD@dhcs.ca.gov). Please indicate “1915(b) Waiver 12-Month Extension Request” in the subject line or message.

To be assured consideration prior to submission of the 1915(b) Waiver 12-month extension request to CMS, DHCS must receive comments no later than August 31, 2020. Please note that DHCS will continue to accept comments after August 31, 2020, but may not be able to consider those comments prior to the initial submission of the 1915(b) Waiver 12-month extension request to CMS.

Upon submission to CMS, a copy of the proposed 1915(b) waiver 12-month extension request will be published at the following internet address:  
[https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/Medi-cal\\_SMHS.aspx](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/Medi-cal_SMHS.aspx).

You may submit a written request for a copy of public comments related to the 1915(b) waiver 12-month extension request to the address or email address listed above. Please indicate “1915(b) Waiver 12-Month Extension Request” in the subject line or message.

### *1115(a) Medi-Cal 2020 Demonstration Waiver Renewal*

In coordination with the 1915(b) Waiver 12-month extension request, DHCS also intends to submit a 12-month extension request for the existing Section 1115(a) Medicaid waiver, entitled Medi-Cal 2020, which was approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on December 30, 2015, and is effective through

December 31, 2020. The proposed Medi-Cal 2020 12-month extension request is available on the DHCS [website](#).

DHCS will host the following public hearings on the Medi-Cal 2020 12-month extension request to solicit stakeholder comments. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to maximize opportunities for participation, all public hearings will be held via webinar.

- Friday, August 7, 2020 – First Public Hearing
  - 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
  - Register [here](#)
- Monday, August 10, 2020 – Second Public Hearing
  - 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
  - Register [here](#)