October 18, 2018

Jennifer Kent, Director
Department of Health Care Services
MS 0000
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director Kent:

The Medi-Cal Children's Health Advisory Panel (MCHAP) is an independent, statewide advisory board, legislatively authorized to advise the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) on matters relevant to all children enrolled in Medi-Cal and their families, including, but not limited to, emerging trends in the care of children, quality measurements, communications between DHCS and Medi-Cal families, provider network issues and Medi-Cal enrollment issues. It has recently endeavored to develop recommendations for improving communications between DHCS and Medi-Cal beneficiaries and their families. This letter summarizes our recommendations from MCHAP's review of the DHCS website and common written communications that DHCS uses.

Medi-Cal can be a complex and confusing program, especially for those who may not have much experience with the health care system, or have limited English proficiency. The DHCS website and communications should continue to optimize their design to better assist beneficiaries in getting the help they need.

Recommendations:

1. **Make help easy to find**
   a. "Contact Us" tab should be more visibly prominent, with preference for changing to the word "Help" instead.
      i. The Medi-Cal help line phone number should appear in large text next to the "Contact Us" or "Help" tab.
   b. Improve contact information within each document or on the website by always including a phone number or link/email address for assistance. Repeat the link or phone number or other contact information whenever it is referenced, so that the beneficiary does not have to navigate away from the page to follow the instruction. Examples from the Office of the Ombudsman's "Common Questions and Issues" document would include:
      i. "Yes, the Office of the Ombudsman can help you. You may call us or e-mail your request for help to MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov."
      ii. When stating phrases such as "You may call us," always provide/repeat the number right there for easy reference.

iii. Similarly: "If you no longer have a private health plan or you have a problem regarding other health insurance, you should call your Medi-Cal eligibility worker."

1. We would suggest having a link or phone number right at the end of that sentence, so that again the person does not need to navigate away from the page to follow the instructions.

2. **Make help easy to use and understand for all**
   a. Ensure literacy levels on website are at the 6th grade reading level, and more accessible to families or individuals with very limited education and/or literacy levels.
      i. Ensure that explanation of Medi-Cal is clear and concise to beneficiaries (refer to [Covered California page](#)).
      ii. If the material is particularly complex or difficult to understand, then include language similar to, "please call the following number if you need help understanding this."
         1. This message should be available in different languages.
      iii. Include reassuring language in materials or on the website such as, "We're here to help," or, "Please call us if you have any questions."
      iv. Include audio options in different languages for beneficiaries so they can listen to how to apply to Medi-Cal, who qualifies for Medi-Cal, the different ways to apply, and contact information.
   b. Include additional language options on website.
      i. Include link, "Español," on DHCS website in the upper right hand corner of the page. This link should redirect to a new page describing what Medi-Cal is and how to apply in Spanish.
      ii. Include a chat feature (in various languages) for the beneficiaries.
   c. Design a Medi-Cal help line banner that is in Spanish.
      i. For the "Medi-Cal Enrollment, Open Year Round" banner, include an "Español" option in the right hand corner of the banner that will redirect to a new page in Spanish.

3. **Add useful content**
   a. Content on the website should be current.
      i. Additional pages should be added to the website, such as information about Emergency or Limited Medi-Cal, and information for young adults aging out of Medi-Cal who were covered by SB 75.
   b. Improve quality reporting (e.g.: comparisons of plans available for each county) on DHCS' Health Care Options website.

Respectfully,

Ken Hempstead, M.D.

Co-Chair, Medi-Cal Children's Health Advisory Panel