

Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program Action Plan

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Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program (HACCP) Overview

Program Overview

The [Budget Act of 2020](#) (Assembly Bill 89, Chapter 7, Statutes of 2020), authorized the [Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program](#) (HACCP), which launched on July 1, 2021. This new state-only program serves California children who are not eligible for Medi-Cal and/or hearing-related coverage through California Children's Services Program (CCS) and live in a household with income up to 600% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Children can qualify for HACCP regardless of immigration status. Without medically necessary hearing aids, deaf and hard-of-hearing children are at high risk for developmental and educational delays. Children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing must be able to utilize every medical assistance/device available to ensure continued learning. HACCP was initially available to children under 18 without insurance or whose insurance does not cover hearing aids and related services. Effective January 1, 2023, the [Budget Act of 2022](#) (Assembly Bill 179, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022) expanded the age criteria for HACCP to children under the age of 21, and broadened coverage to children who had other insurance with coverage of \$1,500 or less for hearing aids. After accounting for this very recent expansion to program eligibility criteria and the ongoing outreach efforts described further below, although smaller than initial estimates, DHCS anticipates that the HACCP enrollment will continue to increase fairly steadily until it reaches a natural equilibrium.

Benefit Structure and Reimbursement. HACCP uses the Medi-Cal fee-for-service (FFS) [billing and claims structure](#), [FFS provider network](#), and [reimbursement rates](#). The program covers hearing aids, including assistive listening devices (ALDs) and surface-worn bone conduction hearing devices (BCHDs); supplies, including ear molds and hearing aid batteries; medically necessary hearing aid accessories; hearing aid-related audiology and post-evaluation services. For more of a comprehensive list, see [HACCP's Provider Guidance webpage](#).

Eligibility and Case Management. DHCS has procured the services of administrative vendor, MAXIMUS, to conduct eligibility determinations and perform ongoing case management for this program on behalf of the Department. The responsibilities of MAXIMUS include the following: 1) performing case intake by reviewing applications to approve/deny applicants for program enrollment, 2) enrolling approved children into the program, 3) operating a call center, 4) developing required program informing and other related materials, 5) maintaining a database for ongoing case management purposes, and 6) conducting program monitoring and oversight, as well as related reporting.

Program Improvements

Prior to program launch in July 2021 to present, DHCS has convened multiple stakeholder workgroups to inform the application process, make refinements in benefit structure, and implement program enhancements to ensure the program is appropriately and adequately serving its intended population. DHCS acknowledges the challenges HACCP faced in the first year of its implementation and understands there are ongoing concerns from the consumer advocate community on program enrollment and provider access. As with many new programs, engagement and onboarding processes for both providers and families participating in HACCP continue to be slow but steady. As of February 22, 2023, 175 children have enrolled in HACCP (among 324 total applications [not unique applicants] received since the launch of the program in July 2021) and 58 providers have opted into the HACCP Provider Locator. For Medi-Cal providers who are accustomed to primarily serving children enrolled in CCS or a Medi-Cal managed care plan, DHCS is providing comprehensive training on additional Medi-Cal FFS processes and procedures (such as the use of Treatment Authorization Requests [TARs]) as required. Advocates have identified a shortage of experienced pediatric audiologists practicing in California, further impacted by difficulties for participating providers in some networks to dispense hearing aids or provide services for children relying on insurance from a different insurance carrier's plan or some state coverage. This shortage of specialists negatively impacts California infants and children needing to see an audiologist who is qualified to evaluate, dispense, fit, and program hearing aids or BCHDs. While this challenge is statewide rather than program-specific, it does impact HACCP.

In response to these concerns, DHCS has made key program improvements:

- **Launching the HACCP Online Application Portal and HACCP 24/7 MedChat.** HACCP launched in July 2021 with a paper application in English and Spanish. In August 2022, HACCP launched an updated [online application](#) in both English and Spanish, which is a key program improvement that DHCS anticipates will accelerate program enrollment and allow for a much smoother consumer journey. To help families navigate any immediate program enrollment questions, DHCS also launched the HACCP

MedChat, which is an instant web chat on the HACCP website that facilitates 24/7 secure uploads for application materials, as well as being monitored by the HACCP Call Center during its regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8 AM – 7 PM, and Saturday, 8 AM – 12 PM) to help respond to any questions.

- **Launching a HACCP-Specific Provider Locator.** HACCP’s July 2021 launch included an online provider search tool to identify Medi-Cal providers eligible to serve HACCP enrollees. In October 2021, DHCS converted this feature to a more targeted, [HACCP-specific provider directory](#) in response to the difficulty of finding a HACCP-participating provider for HACCP enrollees. The HACCP provider network uses the Medi-Cal FFS provider network. The HACCP-specific provider directory allows families to search by zip code to find a nearby, age-appropriate provider. HACCP’s provider directory also connects families to additional resources for identifying Medi-Cal providers (including CCS Communication Disorder Clinics) who are eligible to serve HACCP enrollees, and a link for interested Medi-Cal providers to opt into the HACCP-specific provider directory and provide more inclusive contact information for families to accessibly request an appointment. DHCS’ efforts to optimize this resource are ongoing.
- **Ongoing updates to HACCP billing codes.** Since the program launch in July 2021, DHCS has also updated billing codes, which will continue to occur on a rolling basis, as new codes are added or revised for compliance or based on further medical research, and subject to the scope of program authority to cover hearing aids and hearing aid-related services. For example, in July 2022, Medi-Cal clarified its billing codes and coverage policies for BCHDs, and DHCS concurrently implemented coverage of surface-worn BCHDs for HACCP.

While the key improvements discussed above were critical program refinements, DHCS recognizes that a more cohesive strategy is needed as HACCP continues to grow into a robust program in California. DHCS takes this responsibility seriously and is committed to improving the HACCP program reach, program enrollment, and provider participation, as these three areas are the core pillars that supports the program’s success.

HACCP Action Plan: Our Call to Action

To this end, DHCS is launching the **HACCP Action Plan**, which overviews DHCS' comprehensive strategy on HACCP improvements in 2023. The HACCP Action Plan outlines specific key actionable strategies to (1) improve provider participation, and (2) increase program enrollment. Both strategies include targeted implementation dates, promote program awareness throughout California's diverse communities, and include a final section on ongoing program monitoring and public data reporting, which is critical to improving HACCP's success.

Improve Provider Participation

Targeted Outreach to Medi-Cal FFS Billing Providers who Bill Medi-Cal and CCS

After one year of program implementation, HACCP strives to further improve provider participation. An important strategy to push for additional Medi-Cal FFS provider awareness of HACCP is to conduct strategic, intentional, and targeted outreach to relevant providers in a variety of settings. To this end, DHCS has completed a detailed data analysis of the top 50 Medi-Cal FFS providers with the highest claims and the highest procedure counts of HACCP's covered benefit structure. DHCS will conduct a targeted outreach to recruit these existing Medi-Cal FFS providers already rendering services for Medi-Cal (including CCS) beneficiaries to engage in actively serving HACCP-enrolled children. The table below summarizes the DHCS implementation timelines for this strategy.

DHCS will conduct provider outreach with a lens of supporting timely access to hearing aid-related medical care for children throughout California, including emphasis on provider engagement in three key regions where volume is especially high compared to available pediatric specialists: Central Valley, Los Angeles metropolitan area, and Sacramento area.

Partnerships with Professional Associations for Relevant Medical Providers

As HACCP continues to gain awareness in the provider community, DHCS will continue to partner with professional associations to coordinate outreach and ongoing engagement with relevant professional organizations for audiologists, physicians, and otolaryngologists. Most recently, DHCS attended the California Academy of Audiology (CAA) Annual Conference and the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Audiology Conference to announce and socialize updated program information, assist with provider

questions, and encourage participation in both HACCP and the HACCP-specific provider directory. DHCS looks to continue strengthening these partnerships in these networks in order to build awareness and a “presence” for HACCP.

Action	Frequency	To be Implemented By:
<p>Quarterly Provider Webinar Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHCS will host quarterly webinar sessions to assist qualified providers with information to help pediatric patients and their families to maximize the HACCP benefits. The training sessions will address the program requirements for families to apply for coverage and the claims submission process for audiologists, otolaryngologists, physicians, and their office staff. 	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>September 2022 and quarterly ongoing, with future dates to be announced on DHCS’ HACCP Resources for Medical Providers webpage.</p> <p>September Series (2022):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 27, 2022, 12 - 12:50 PM September 28, 2022, 6 - 6:50 PM <p>January Series (2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 24, 2023, 12 - 12:50 PM
<p>Targeted Program Outreach Materials to Top 50 Medi-Cal Billing Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHCS will design and distribute brochures/flyers to promote HACCP eligibility criteria, enrollment instructions to the top 50 Medi-Cal billing providers and provide any ad-hoc provider webinars or recordings to support their awareness and participation in HACCP. Additionally, DHCS will disseminate brochures for these providers to display in office. DHCS will refresh the top 50 providers each calendar quarter and conduct targeted program outreach (e.g., phone campaign, updated program materials) to Medi-Cal FFS providers not yet participating in HACCP. Outreach will focus on increasing provider awareness, addressing provider questions, and supporting engagement of relevant providers. 	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Save the Dates for January 2023 and quarterly ongoing, with future dates to be announced on DHCS’ HACCP Resources for Medical Providers webpage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save the Dates sent in December 2022 for January 24, 2023

Action	Frequency	To be Implemented By:
<p>Building Partnerships with Professional Associations for Relevant Medical Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHCS will attend conferences for audiologists and other hearing aid-related medical professionals DHCS to present and host a HACCP Exhibit at audiology and other hearing aid-related conferences 	Continuous	<p>DHCS continues to attend association events to deepening engagement.</p> <p><i>Attended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAA Annual Conference, September 8-10, 2022 UCSF Audiology Conference, October 14-15, 2022 <p><i>Upcoming:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAA Annual Conference, September 28-30, 2023

Increase Program Enrollment

DHCS recognizes that strengthening HACCP coverage base is one of the foundational key pillars for program success. As of February 22, 2023, HACCP has enrolled 175 children. With the [online application](#) launch in August 2022 and eligibility expansion in January 2023, DHCS anticipates program enrollment to rise, but additional efforts are still needed to promote the program to effectuate higher enrollment. To measure HACCP’s progress, DHCS plans to publish a monthly HACCP program data dashboard on the [DHCS HACCP webpage](#). DHCS worked with MAXIMUS, the administrative vendor that administers the day-to-day operations of HACCP on behalf of the Department, in mapping out the following strategies and associated timelines to meet this goal.

Action	To be Implemented By:
<p>Implement a comprehensive phone campaign to assist eligible families:</p> <p>The MAXIMUS Call Center will directly engage with families to improve the HACCP customer experience. The Call Center representatives will advise families, help them identify participating providers, and help resolve HACCP coverage and benefit issues. Specifically, MAXIMUS, under the direction of DHCS, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement “Welcome” call scripts to better explain how to access benefits (such as nearest participating audiologist) • Update Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system for families who are calling the MAXIMUS Call Center that helps them to easily navigate the common questions • Conduct phone application assistance in case applicants need help completing the applications (outbound calls to online applications that are started but not completed) • Conduct a six-week follow-up call to confirm enrollees have accessed care or have an appointment • Assist families, after the initial connection, to verify missing information with at least five call-back attempts • Assist families to locate a provider in their area and act as a liaison for provider referrals • Assist individuals who have enrolled but their provider has not submitted a TAR, or whose approved TAR is submitted, but no services is provided. 	<p>Welcome and missing information Call Campaigns: October 2022 and continuous</p> <p>Remaining optimizations: February 2023 and continuous</p>

Action	To be Implemented By:
<p>Improved Outreach Materials that are Intentional and Targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHCS will design improved brochures/flyers to promote HACCP eligibility criteria, enrollment instructions. The materials will promote online application portal and MedChat (instant web chat) upload functionality on the DHCS HACCP webpage. • DHCS will send these materials to provider offices and will use these materials for all DHCS HACCP-related presentations. • Threshold Languages: Translating all HACCP documents in all Medi-Cal threshold languages 	<p>Improved brochures/flyers: December 2022-February 2023</p> <p>Threshold languages for online application portal using a phased approach by languages with highest needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese, Korean: implemented January 2023 • Vietnamese, Russian, Hmong: end of February 2023 • Armenian, Arabic, Tagalog: April 2023 • Ukrainian, Farsi, Cambodian: June 2023 • Laotian, Japanese, Hindi: Summer 2023 • Punjabi, Thai, Mien: Fall 2023 <p>Threshold languages for enrollment-related letters using a phased approach by languages with highest needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese: implemented January 2023 • Russian, Armenian, Arabic, Tagalog, Hmong, Farsi, Cambodian: April 2023 • Laotian, Japanese, Ukrainian, Hindi, Punjabi, Thai, Mien: August 2023

Action	To be Implemented By:
<p>Develop a HACCP Communications Toolkit of DHCS-approved messaging for Advocates, Providers, Associations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HACCP Communications Toolkit will include DHCS-approved messaging to disseminate to advocate partners, providers, associations. Messaging will be tailored to support two key audiences (families and providers) engaging with HACCP. • DHCS is developing the HACCP Communications Toolkit in consultation and review with advocate partners. 	<p>DHCS shared a toolkit preview with advocate partners in December 2022.</p> <p>DHCS published the revised toolkit on DHCS' HACCP webpage in February 2023.</p>
<p>Deepen Partnerships with California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), Department of Education (CDE), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and Covered California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with CDE, DHCS' Medi-Cal Local Education Assistance – Billing Options Program, and/or large school districts to include HACCP materials with referrals generated from school hearing screenings and to educate school audiometrists about the program and deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) teachers and intervention providers. • Provide HACCP materials for inclusion in the CDPH Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NHSP) packets and appropriate NHSP publications. • Partner with DCA regarding opportunities to include provider outreach materials audiology licensing renewal correspondence. • Partner with DDS regarding comprehensive HACCP outreach to Early Start recipients and providers, Regional Centers, and Family Resource Center (FRC) staff. • Partner with Covered California to include/disseminate HACCP resources for families. 	<p>February 2023 and ongoing</p>
<p>Implement Quarterly Family Webinars for Newly Enrolled Families or Interested Families</p>	<p>November 2022 and quarterly ongoing, with future dates to be announced on DHCS' HACCP Resources for Families webpage.</p> <p>November Series (2022):</p>

Action	To be Implemented By:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 15, 2022, 10 - 10:50 AM • November 15, 2022, 6 - 6:50 PM <p>March Series (2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 9, 2023, 11 - 11:50 AM

Ongoing Program Monitoring and Reporting

To measure HACCP’s progress, DHCS has published a monthly HACCP enrollment dashboard on the [DHCS HACCP webpage](#). The online dashboard will facilitate DHCS’ timely communication of updates to community partners, including advocates, regarding program enrollment and application statistics.

HACCP Resources

DHCS has released continuous program updates throughout the development and implementation of HACCP in order to assist providers and families with frequently asked questions, policy changes, policy clarifications, and other useful information. This guidance can be found at the following links:

Resource	Last Updated	Resource Overview
Provider webinar	January 24, 2023	Program overview and updates, including expanded eligibility parameters
Provider manual	January 13, 2023	Program overview and comprehensive explanation of program eligibility, covered benefits, and authorization requirements
HACCP website	December 13, 2022	Program overview, details, and additional resources for families, providers, and community partners
Families webinar	November 15, 2022	Program overview and updates, including preview of January 2023 expanded eligibility
Provider webinar	September 27-28, 2022	Program overview and updates, including additional covered benefits and treatment authorization guidance (clinician presentation)

Resource	Last Updated	Resource Overview
Medi-Cal Provider Newsflash	July 25, 2022	Addition of surface-worn bone conduction hearing devices as a covered benefit for HACCP
Medi-Cal Provider Bulletin 562	July 2022	Expansion of bone conduction hearing devices as a covered benefit for Medi-Cal and updated Provider Manuals: Audiology and Hearing Aids (audio (5, 7–9) ; audio cd (3) ; hear aid bill (6) ; hear aid cd (8))
Families webinar	April 28, 2022	Program overview and updates, including what information to bring to your child’s first appointment with their HACCP-participating audiologist
Provider webinar	March 17, 2022	Program overview and updates, including additional covered benefits and treatment authorization guidance
Medi-Cal Provider Newsflash	March 8, 2022	Additional covered benefits for HACCP, including assistive listening devices and specified audiology services
Medi-Cal Provider Bulletin 558	March 2022	Additional covered benefits for HACCP, including assistive listening devices and specified audiology services, and updated Provider Manuals: Part 1/Aid Codes, Audiology and Hearing Aids
Provider webinar	July 30, 2021	Introductory program information