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Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter No.: I 19-04

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

SUBJECT: National Voter Registration Act Pre- Registration for Minors, Forwarding
Voter Registration Card Change, and Training Updates

(References: Medi-Cal All County Welfare Director's Letter No. 94-85, 95-36, 95-67, Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter 12-02, 14-40, 14-54, California Department of Social Services All County Information Notice No. 1.46-94, 1-56-95, 1-17-96, 1-09-09, I-01-12 and 1-04-13, All County Letter 18-39 and Public Law 103-31, Section 7, May 20, 1993)

The purpose of this letter is to inform County Welfare Departments (CWDs) of recent changes to the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and to transmit information regarding updated NVRA training materials. The Secretary of State (SOS) issued a notice dated January 2018 advising NVRA agencies of recent changes to voter pre-registration for eligible 16 and 17 year olds, as well as a change in the timeframe for NVRA agencies to forward Voter Registration Cards (VRCs) to the County Elections Office.

The updated SOS NVRA notice provides information regarding the release of the new VRC timeframe and the California Voter's Choice Act.

Background

On July 11, 2014, the Department of Health Care Services issued Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter (MEDIL 14-40) to remind CWDs of the NVRA requirements. The NVRA requires states to provide voter registration opportunities at all public assistance agencies that accept applications and administer benefits, including CWD offices, and at all offices that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities. These offices, known as voter registration agencies include CWDs that provide assistance with programs such as CalFresh,

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, Medi-Cal, Women, Infants and Children nutrition program, California Health Benefit Exchange (Covered California), and In-Home Supportive Services.

In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 113 (Chapter 619, Statutes 2014), which allowed voter pre-registration for eligible 16 and 17 year olds, once California's State Voter Registration Database, known as VoteCal, was certified.

The SOS published news release, AP16:127, titled Secretary of State Padilla Certifies VoteCal Statewide Voter Registration Database | California Secretary of State on September 26, 2016, which certified VoteCal as the system of record for voter registration in California.

Please note that the NVRA previously required voter registration agencies to transmit completed VRCs to the County Elections Office within ten days of receipt. However, in January 2018 the SOS informed agencies of the new three-calendar day submission timeframe.

PRE-REGISTER AT 16. VOTER REGISTRATION AT 18.

The SOS issued a "2018 NVRA Updates" notice on January 2018. This notice provides information regarding new voter pre-registration for eligible 16 and 17 year olds.

Voter pre-registration is now available for eligible Californians aged 16 or 17 years old. Pre-registration can be completed online by visiting <https://registertovote.ca.gov/> or by filling out a paper voter registration application. California youth who pre-register to vote will be automatically registered to vote on their 18th birthday. Pre-registration does not change the voting age, which remains 18 years old. Instead, it allows eligible Californians ages 16 or 17 to pre-register, providing sufficient time and opportunity to get ready to vote.

According to the SOS website, pre-registration is available to California youth who are 16 or 17 year olds and meet the following criteria:

- A United States citizen,
- A resident of California,
- Not currently imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony, and
- Not prohibited from voting by a court because of mental incompetency.

Counties must provide the voter registration application to any applicant or beneficiary 16 years old or older and follow the same process as that of any other voter registration

application, to ensure the office site will receive NVRA credit for these transactions. As is the standard for beneficiaries 18 or older, it is not the responsibility of local agency staff to determine voter eligibility for 16 or 17 year old applicants, but simply to inform the applicant of the voter registration requirements. If completed, CWDs must collect the voter registration application and submit it to the County Elections Office within three calendar days. Additional information regarding pre-registration is located on the SOS website at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/pre-register-16-vote-18.

New CWD Responsibility

Changes to the NVRA now require that CWDs provide all 16 and 17-year-olds with a VRC at the time of application, recertification, or when the CWD is notified of an address change. The Voter Preference Form and VRC shall be provided regardless of whether the applicant or beneficiary indicates they want to register to vote or not. The CWD must provide assistance in completing the form, if requested, and provide the same degree of assistance to all clients.

CWDs must fulfill this responsibility whether the applicant/beneficiary transaction occurs in-person, online, over the telephone, or through the mail.

Change in Timeframe for Forwarding VRCs to the County Elections Office

If a VRC is completed and returned to the CWD, it is the CWD's responsibility to accept and transmit the completed VRC to the appropriate County Elections Office within **three calendar days**. This is a change to the previous ten-day timeframe. The SOS's NVRA team is in the process of updating the NVRA Manual to reflect this change. As a best practice, the SOS advises voter registration agencies to forward VRCs on a daily basis.

New California Voter Registration Card and Voter's Choice Act (SB 450)

Beginning in April 2018, the SOS issued a new version of the VRC. Training materials provided by SOS will be updated to include the new VRC.

The California Voter's Choice Act passed in 2016 expanding voters' options for how, when, and where they cast their ballots. Select counties, including Madera, Napa, Nevada, Sacramento, and San Mateo, will now mail every voter a ballot. Once completed, voters may mail back the ballot, return it in the secure envelope to one of the county ballot drop boxes, or submit it at any vote center in the county. Vote centers will replace traditional polling places. Voters will be able to cast a ballot in-person at any vote center in their county, instead of being tied to a single polling location.

At any vote center in a participating county, a voter may:

- Vote in-person
- Drop off their ballot
- Get a replacement ballot
- Vote using accessible voting machine
- Get help and voting material in multiple languages
- Register to vote or update their voter registration

Beginning in 2018, the selected counties will implement the changes outlined above. More information about the Voter's Choice Act is available on the SOS website at <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/>

Updated Training Materials

All staff at voter registration agencies must participate in annual NVRA training. All NVRA coordinators are encouraged to visit the SOS's resources page to access the newly updated training materials such as Frequently Asked Questions, NVRA Basics Quick Reference Sheet, and many more tools that are useful. If assistance with providing annual training to local agency staff is necessary, please contact the SOS's NVRA Team or the County Elections NVRA Coordinator. Training materials are located at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/nvra/training.

The CWDs must comply with the NVRA requirements or the county and state may be subject to a civil action by the United States Department of Justice or a private party. The SOS has authority to conduct a review of each voter registration agency's compliance on NVRA.

If you have any questions or if we can provide further information, please contact Irene Hunter by phone at (916) 345-8171 or by email at irene.hunter@dhcs.ca.gov.

Original Signed By

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