

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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July 25, 2001

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Administrative Officers
All County Medi-Cal Program Specialists/Liaisons
All County Health Executives
All County Mental Health Directors

Letter No.: 01-41

EXPEDITED MEDI-CAL CASE PROCESSING FOR ENTRANTS TO THE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

The purpose of this letter is to instruct counties to conduct expedited case processing so that children removed from their homes and placed in foster care will have immediate proof of eligibility for Medi-Cal thus ensuring immediate access to health care if it is needed.

In the past four years there have been public hearings and several study reports evaluating the foster care program and identifying barriers to care. A frequent issue has been the delay in issuance of the child's Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card (BIC) after the child is removed from the home and a dependency order issued. Since new entrants to foster care may require immediate medical care, any delay in the receipt of a BIC is a significant barrier to medical services as providers often will not provide care without proof of eligibility.

Medi-Cal Eligibility Procedures Manual Section 4-J directs the county to expedite the processing of eligibility determination for minor consent applicants, persons who require medical treatment that cannot be provided without a Medi-Cal card and pregnant women (not presumptive eligibility applicants). The county is to issue proof of Medi-Cal eligibility for each applicant until the BIC card is issued. The Department of Health Services (DHS) will amend these procedures to include the new policy of expedited eligibility processing for foster care children. Since petitions must be filed with the court within 48 hours of the child's removal from the home and a dependency hearing held within 24 hours of the petition, the child's Medi-Cal eligibility may begin upon issuance of the dependency order.

Counties are directed to treat foster care children as immediate need applicants as soon as the dependency order is issued. The Medi-Cal eligibility worker should cooperate with the foster care worker assigned the new case to obtain the information necessary to update the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System and immediately issue proof of eligibility following the dependency order. This expedited procedure has the benefit of assuring rapid access to necessary medical care for the child and reduces the financial burden on the county which is responsible for medical services for the child until Medi-Cal eligibility is determined.

Each county should appoint a Foster Care Coordinator in the Medi-Cal eligibility agency to ensure that foster care workers and child protective services workers who are involved in removal of a child from the home, have a contact within the eligibility agency to expedite the issuance of proof of eligibility for the child. The coordinator will also be a point of contact with DHS Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch when the need arises. Please send the name, phone number, and E-mail address of your coordinator by fax or E-mail to Janeen Jimenez. You may E-mail this information to her at jjimenez@dhs.ca.gov. or fax it to her at (916) 657-3224.

In addition, counties are directed to issue immediate proof of eligibility, at the request of a child's authorized representative, to a child under a dependency order who was Medi-Cal eligible at the time of removal from the home but does not have access to his or her BIC. An authorized representative would include a foster care worker or foster parent.

These procedures are effective immediately. If you have questions regarding these instructions, please contact Carl Miller, Chief, Policy Unit A-1 at (916) 657-0562, or members of his staff Ms. Erin Lynch at (916) 654-5769 or Ms. Janeen Jimenez at (916) 657-1248.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Shar Schroepfer, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch