



Medi-Cal and Managed Care: Questions and Answers to Help You Get the Best Health Care for You

What is a Medi-Cal managed care plan?

If you are on Medi-Cal and in a “managed care plan,” you will need to receive most or all of your health care from a provider in your health plan.

Your health plan will ask you to choose a primary care doctor who is responsible for managing and coordinating all of your health care, such as visits with specialists, diagnostic services such as lab tests or x-rays, and medical equipment or supplies. If you do not have a referral or you choose to go to a doctor outside of your health plan’s network, you may have to pay for that care.

What will my health care plan provide?

Your health care plan must:

- Give you an appointment when you need one within specified time limits.
- Help you find a specialist when you need one.
- Help you if your doctor or medical group leaves your plan.
- Allow you to get a second doctor’s opinion at no additional cost.
- Approve care that you need and tell you the reason if it denies a service or treatment.
- Give you a written diagnosis (description of your health problem).
- Make sure you agree before you have a treatment.

What happens if I do not get what I need?

You have certain RIGHTS when enrolled in a Medi-Cal managed care plan. If you are not getting the health care you need, you have a right to file GRIEVANCES and APPEALS. Here’s how.

STEP 1: Talk to Your Doctor and Your Health Plan

- Call your doctor. Ask what the doctor thinks you should do and how the doctor can help you.
- Call your health plan’s Member Services phone number and explain your problem. The number is on your membership card.

(continued)

Having problems with your managed care plan?

Here’s how to get help:

- Call 1-888-804-3536 to reach a Health Consumer Center for local independent consumer help with any questions or problems.
- This brochure also explains how the state Department of Managed Health Care Help Line can assist you.

Call a **Health Consumer Center** at any time at **1-888-804-3536** if you have more questions or need help. You can also go to **www.healthconsumer.org**.

If there is an urgent issue, call the Help Center at the State Department of Managed Health Care: **1-888-466-2219**.

STEP 2: File a Grievance with Your Health Plan

If talking to your doctor and your health plan does not help, you should file a grievance with your Medi-Cal health plan. Talk to your health plan to find out if there is a time limit to file your grievance.

There are two ways to file a grievance:

- **Over the phone.** To file by phone, call Member Services. The number is on your health plan membership card. Tell them you want to file a grievance and explain your problem. The health plan must send you a letter within 5 days showing that you filed a grievance unless the problem gets resolved within 24 hours.
- **In writing, either by mail, fax or online.** Call Member Services to request a grievance form. They can also provide instructions for filing by fax or online.

STEP 3: Call the Help Center.

The Help Center is a state agency that can assist you in a variety of ways, including asking for an *Independent Medical Review* or filing a Complaint against your health plan. Here's when to call the Help Center:

- If you have urgent care needs.
- If your needs are not urgent, but you do not like the plan's decision or the plan has not responded within 30 days.

- If your health plan did not approve medical care, including experimental treatment, or did not pay for emergency or urgent care and you wish to ask for an *Independent Medical Review*. An *Independent Medical Review* brings in doctors to review your case. This is very helpful when you want to challenge a decision related to recommendations for medical treatment.
- If you have the kind of problem that is not right for an *Independent Medical Review*, you can file a Complaint with the Help Center. For example, if your doctor's office sends you a bill because your health plan did not pay, you should file a Complaint.
- If your health is at risk, the Help Center can review your problem right away.

STEP 4: Ask for a Medi-Cal Hearing.

A Medi-Cal Hearing gives you a chance to explain your problem to a judge. If your problem cannot wait for a regular hearing time, ask the judge for an urgent hearing. If a judge decides that your problem is urgent, the hearing should be scheduled in 10 days.

Please note: If you have a Medi-Cal Hearing, you **cannot** ask for an *Independent Medical Review*. However, you can ask for a Medi-Cal Hearing if you are not satisfied with a decision from an *Independent Medical Review*.

Call a **Health Consumer Center** at any time at **1-888-804-3536** if you have more questions or need help. You can also go to **www.healthconsumer.org**.