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Issue 26-07 (REV) Date: 04/09/2026

MEDI-CAL: A FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMED DECISIONS FOR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME-CARE

PURPOSE: This FYI provides updated information on Managed Care Plan (MCP) Medi-Cal, corrects misconceptions, and offers a framework to guide Children's Social Workers (CSWs) to support medical decision makers with children in out-of-home care.

Fee-for-service Medi-Cal and Managed Care Plan Medi-Cal:
All children in the DCFS' custodial care are eligible for full-scope Medi-Cal (MC) to access medical, dental, mental health, and other services. There are two programs of Medi-Cal – Fee-for-service (FFS) and Managed Care Plan (MCP). The medical decision maker, usually the caregiver, decides on what Medi-Cal program they want for the child. On a basic level, Medi-Cal FFS (sometimes referred to as "Straight" Medi-Cal) is administered by the state and Medi-Cal MCP is administered by a local health plan. Medi-Cal MCP and FFS share several common key features, such as well child checks, preventive services; transportation services, ensuring members can access medical care; doulas, providing support during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum; and community health workers, assisting members in navigating the healthcare system, offering education, and connecting them to valuable resources.

KEY UPDATES and BENEFITS OF MCPs

Medi-Cal MCPs now offer **exclusive** benefits not available in Fee-For-Service Medi-Cal. This includes programs like Enhanced Care Management (ECM) and Community Supports (CS).

- **ECM**: Provides person-centered, community-based care management, to address health and social needs for high-need Medi-Cal members.
    - Youth involved in child welfare are automatically eligible for ECM, and the ECM Lead Care Manager can support care coordination for youth across systems, even after exiting DCFS.
- **CS**: Addresses health-related social needs and helps avoid higher levels of care.
    - Examples include housing supports, medically tailored meals, and asthma remediation.
- **Language Interpretation**: MCPs provide access to language interpretation services.
- **24-hour Nurse Advice Line**: MCPs provide a 24-hour nurse advice line to assist with urgent care needs.
- **Child Welfare Liaisons**: MCPs employ Child Welfare Liaisons who may address gaps in services and link to coordination.
- **Continuity of Care Protocols:** Allows beneficiaries who change health plans to see an out-of-network provider with whom they have a pre-existing relationship for up to twelve (12) months or through the completion of treatment for certain conditions.

DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS

Common Misconceptions	Understanding the Facts
Medi-Cal FFS is full scope vs. MCP which is limited.	All children with either Medi-Cal MCP or FFS have full scope (of care).
Some children in the child welfare system are not eligible for Medi-Cal.	All children in the county's custodial care, including children in out-of-home care, mandatory or voluntary Family Maintenance, are eligible for Medi-Cal, as well as those who are undocumented.
A child or youth enrolled in Medi-Cal MCP cannot access Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) or Department of Mental Health (DMH) Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) services.	All children/youth under Medi-Cal, including those enrolled in MCPs, have access to SMHS and MAT.
If children remain in their home, even if they are under court-ordered supervision, they must remain on the current insurance and can't access DMH services.	All children in the county's custodial care, including those in out-of-home care and mandatory or voluntary Family Maintenance, are eligible for Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal can be designated as the primary insurance, while the child's private insurance serves as secondary.
Only children on Medi-Cal FFS can access the assessment services at the Department of Health Services (DHS) Medical Hubs.	All children involved in the child welfare system can access forensic and initial medical examination and medical clearance services at the hubs regardless of their Medi-Cal status or private insurance.
Managed care disrupts services for children moving across counties.	Some MCPs operate in multiple, contiguous counties, allowing children to stay enrolled with the same plan despite placement changes.

The Medi-Cal Fee-For-Service and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan informational flyer can be provided to caregivers as an informative resource regarding Medi-Cal options.

Additional information for CSWs regarding Medi-Cal can be found here.

MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR CSWs

1) **Check Existing Enrollment**:
   - During an emergency response investigation, gather information about the child's existing Medi-Cal /private insurance enrollment, and document this information on the Contact Notebook in CWS/CMS.
   - Provide the parents with the Medi-Cal Fee-For-Service and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan informational flyer, if they report the child has Medi-Cal.

2) **Guiding Principles of Health Insurance**:
   - When enrolling or re-enrolling children in Medi-Cal, consider the following principles:
     - **Placement Stability:** Do not disrupt health insurance until placement is stable.
     - **Child's Health Needs and Benefit Matching:** Decisions should consider the health needs of the child and the possible match of benefits of the health insurance program.
     - **Continuity of Care:** Having continuity with a trusted primary care provider (pediatrician) should be a goal – a consistent presence in the child's life. Aim to maintain continuity of care by selecting a health insurance program that allows the child to continue seeing trusted primary care provider and specialty providers.
     - **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Health insurance choice is ultimately a routine medical decision of the caregiver – but this choice should be a careful consideration between resource parent, bio parent (if available), CSW, and as applicable Public Health Nurses, Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and/or clinicians.

3) **Consider Parent/Caregiver Enrollment:**
   - Because **family reunification** is the goal, keeping a child enrolled in the same plan as their parent(s) may promote continuity upon return.
   - For **kinship placements**, having the child enrolled in the same plan as their Kin caregiver may facilitate care.

If a caregiver/parent wishes to enroll child in Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan, they may do so online at https://www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov/en/enroll and choose "Enroll" on right below the Mission Statement or call (800) 430-4263. If a caregiver wishes to disenroll child from Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan to FFS, the primary CSW may submit a request through a Foster Care Search System (FCSS) Automated 280.

Inquiries regarding Medi-Cal options or related to this FYI can be directed to:
Ask the Doctor (askthedoctor@dcfs.lacounty.gov).

For more resources, please click here.

If you have any questions regarding this release, please email your question to:
Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov