DHCS CELEBRATES MEDI-CAL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is hosting an event today at the Sacramento Convention Center to mark the 50th Anniversary of Medi-Cal, which now provides health care coverage to nearly 14 million Californians – one third of the state's population.

"Medi-Cal has unquestionably played a significant role in improving the overall health and well-being of Californians over the past 50 years," said DHCS Director Jennifer Kent. "While it is important to look back on the accomplishments of the last half century, we are extremely excited to help lead our program through the many challenges and changes we'll face in the coming years."

The celebration of the anniversary kicks off at 4 p.m. with a panel discussion among federal, state and county representatives, who will discuss the progress of Medi-Cal, and debate important aspects of California health care in general. Topics of discussion will include the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on health care delivery, recent legislative action addressing the opioid epidemic and the recent expansion of Medi-Cal to new populations.

DHCS also commissioned a video to help illustrate why the program is so critical to the state, even beyond its own beneficiaries. It features personal stories as told by people whose lives were changed by Medi-Cal. It will be debuted at the event, along with a new Medi-Cal mobile phone app **for iOS and Android.**

In addition to today's event, DHCS will conduct community education campaigns throughout the state to mark the 50th anniversary. The events will offer information and assistance to those who need coverage, but have yet to enroll. The campaigns will be held with Medi-Cal partners, such as Medi-Cal health plans, medical providers, counties and advocates.

Medi-Cal, California's version of Medicaid, was created in 1966 as a federal/state partnership to provide health coverage for low-income Californians. In January 2014, the ACA opened the door for more low-income adults to qualify for Medicaid. About 4.7 million people have enrolled in Medi-Cal since the ACA was implemented, 3.4 million of whom became eligible as part of the ACA Medicaid expansion. Many of these new enrollees are receiving regular health coverage for the first time in their lives.

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"Medi-Cal continues to evolve from its earliest days and now represents a dynamic health care delivery system that is extremely efficient and serves as the backbone of California's broader health care environment," said Kent.

Medi-Cal covers children, families, low-income adults, former foster children, pregnant women, seniors and persons with disabilities. The program's comprehensive benefits, no different than private insurance, include preventive services, medical, dental, mental health, vision, substance abuse treatment and long-term care services and supports. Medi-Cal also supports rural hospitals, trauma centers and other "safety net" services and providers that care for patients who otherwise would not be able to afford or access care.

For more information, please visit the DHCS website.

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