DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
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May 24, 1999

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

Letter No.: 99-24

REVISED MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY QUALITY CONTROL (MEQC) APPEAL PROCESS

Ref.: Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Section 50116.5

The purpose of this letter is to document our revised MEQC appeal process. The revised policy increases the second level window of appeal opportunity from the current 15 to 30 days. The reasons for this extended time period are to address county concerns, provide for more adequate consideration and documentation time, and to encourage appropriate second level appeals. This policy revision is in response to concerns presented by several counties.

Current MEQC Disagreement and Appeal Process

As part of the federally mandated Quality Control review of California's Medi-Cal program, MEQC staff reviews Medi-Cal Assistance Only cases to determine the accuracy of county eligibility determinations and share-of-cost computations. When MEQC staff documents error findings, the county may document its concerns in a memorandum to the MEQC regional office. Based on Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Section 50116.5, the county has two weeks from the issuance of the error findings to document its first level appeal.

If the regional MEQC office agrees with the county's first level appeal letter, MEQC rescinds the error finding. If the regional MEQC office affirms the original error finding, MEQC staff documents their response to the county. If the county does not agree with this response, it may appeal to the second level. Second level appeals must be received by MEQC within 15 days of transmittal of the first level appeal response. MEQC staff reviews the second level appeal letter, consults with appropriate staff and documents the second level appeal response. The second level appeal response is the final resolution.

Revised MEQC Disagreement and Appeal Process

Under the current process, several counties have felt constrained due to time limitations. County staff has reported that the current 15-day window of second level appeal opportunity is

unrealistic and incompatible with full consideration, discussion, and documentation requirements. This may have had a chilling effect on counties' abilities to fully participate in the appeal process.

To remedy this situation, MEQC staff had considered extending the first level appeal process. This panacea was impractical because the time element is documented in state regulations. The regulations are silent on second level appeal requirements. Thus, MEQC staff decided to expand the time frame for second level appeals.

Thus, under the revised appeal process, the first level appeal window is unchanged (i.e., two weeks), while the second level appeal window has been expanded from 15 to 30 days.

We anticipate that this policy revision will make the MEQC process more user friendly and encourage necessary second level appeals. This policy will become effective on July 1, 1999, with the inception of the March-September 1999 base period review.

If you have any questions, or seek further information, please contact Mr. Richard Martinez of my staff at (559) 228-5916.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

ANGELINE MRVA, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch