STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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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.:00-13

NEW MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY DATA SYSTEM (MEDS) REPORTING PROCEDURES THAT AFFECT CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AND THE ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP)

Ref.: All County Welfare Directors Letters (ACWDL) Nos. 97-02, 99-35, 99-57, and 99-58

The purpose of this letter is to notify counties of several recent MEDS enhancements that will ensure appropriate access to medical care for children in foster care and children or youth under 21 receiving AAP. These enhancements now allow counties to report information that will permit managed care plan enrollments for children who are residing in a county other than the county responsible for the foster care or AAP payments. These enhancements also simplify the process for ensuring that MEDS shows Medi-Cal eligibility for children placed in a California facility with an out-of-state business mailing address.

Background

Prior to these enhancements, MEDS allowed for only one current and one pending address. The address reported to MEDS would be the address used when mailing beneficiary notices and the Benefits Identification Card. The beneficiary's mailing address is usually, but not always, the beneficiary's residence address. In addition, MEDS allowed for only the county code of the county responsible for the beneficiary's eligibility. In some cases, especially with the children in foster care and AAP, the county of responsibility may not necessarily be the beneficiary's county of residence.

Because enrollment in a county organized health system (COHS) is based on county code, and because enrollment in a managed care plan is based on county or ZIP Code, limitations in MEDS information created a more complex process for beneficiaries when accessing medical care. These limitations additionally created an extra workload for

counties in reporting Medi-Cal eligibility for children in foster care who had been placed in California facilities with an out-of-state business mailing address.

On January 13, 1997, ACWDL 97-02 instructed counties that children in foster care and children or youth receiving AAP would not be required to enroll in a Medi-Cal managed care plan and would not be included in a mandatory enrollment category. For children from a COHS county, mandatory managed care plan enrollment is required. Children residing in and receiving foster care or AAP benefits from the COHS county also received Medi-Cal from the COHS. When these children were transferred out of the COHS county, they could not be disenrolled from the COHS because enrollment was the responsibility of the sending county.

Currently, an AAP child or a child in foster care who leaves the resident county, which is a COHS, follows a specific process to accommodate the move. First, the foster care placement worker or social worker notifies the COHS of the out-of-county placement of the child. Then the worker notifies the COHS of the child's physician preference in the new county. The COHS sends an orientation package to the physician and to the foster care provider or adoptive parents. Once the provider accepts the child as a patient, the COHS or county placement worker provides the physician with written instructions on how to register with and submit claims to the COHS. The foster care provider, adoptive parent, and physician are encouraged to maintain contact with the COHS Case Management Department to solve problems.

MEDS Residence Address and County Code Enhancements

Changes made to MEDS within the last year accommodate this intercounty movement because they provide for storing both residence and mailing addresses (if different), and for storing a residence county for each month of eligibility. As part of this change, addresses will be verified using United States Postal Service (USPS) address standardization logic. If a residence address is reported to MEDS and verified via the United States Postal Service, and the ZIP Code is one that does not cross county lines, the residence county is then identified based on the address. Counties will also be able to report the residence county to MEDS when the ZIP Code changes (out-of-county), or when the residence address is not reported.

COHS and managed care plan enrollment logic has been revised to use the residence county, when available, in lieu of the responsible county (from the County Identification) for determining enrollments based on county. Logic for managed care plan enrollments based on ZIP Code has been revised to use the residence ZIP Code, when available, in lieu of the mailing address ZIP Code. Logic for determining when a child in foster care is residing out-of-state and so is not eligible for Medi-Cal coverage has also been revised to use the residence ZIP Code or county, when available, in lieu of the mailing address ZIP Code.

MEDS has also been revised to accept the new residence and mailing address fields and the new county of residence fields in county batch input transactions. MEDS online screens have been revised to allow reporting of residence county. Upcoming additional changes, of which you will be apprised, will revise MEDS online screens to allow reporting of the new residence and mailing addresses for online corrections, and for use by counties that have not yet revised their county systems to report the new fields.

MEDS Reporting Changes for Foster Care and AAP Children

When a child in foster care or AAP is placed or moves outside of the responsible county, the responsible county should report the residence county or the residence address to MEDS. Once the residence county is reported to MEDS for the current month, MEDS will carry that residence county forward until a different address is reported for that child. This will ensure that COHS and other types of managed care plan enrollment is handled promptly and appropriately based on the beneficiary's residence. These actions also help prevent interruptions in access to care.

When a child in foster care is placed in a facility that has an out-of-state mailing address, the responsible county should report the residence county or residence address to MEDS. This will ensure that these beneficiaries are shown as Medi-Cal eligible on MEDS rather than as eligible for cash assistance only. This will eliminate the need for the county to perform monthly online immediate need updates to establish the child's Medi-Cal eligibility.

Implementation of this process is essential as it ensures that children in foster care or receiving AAP who have been placed out-of-county will not experience difficulties in accessing necessary health care.

For more information on the use of the MEDS address enhancement, please review ACWDLs 99-35, 99-57 and 99-58. If you have any further questions regarding the MEDS address enhancement, please contact Nancy King of the Information Technology Services Division at (916) 657-0782. If you have any questions regarding Medi-Cal eligibility for the AAP child or the child in foster care, please call Erin Lynch at (916) 654-5769 or Kenneth Martinez at (916) 657-0011.

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