STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

PETE WILSON, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
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February 13, 1998

Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch Information Letter No. I-98-6

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Medi-Cal Program Specialists/Liaisons

BENEFICIARY NOTICE RE MEDI-CAL SPECIALTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The purpose of this letter is to inform counties of their responsibility to make the enclosed beneficiary notices available and on display for applicants and beneficiaries at county welfare sites regarding the Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services Consolidation Program, which is currently being implemented by the State Department of Mental Health (DMH) in all counties except Solano and San Mateo Counties. This program provides specialty mental health services to **all** Medi-Cal beneficiaries in the county through a Mental Health Plan (MHP), a managed care plan specializing in mental health services.

The notices explain how the beneficiaries may access specialty mental health services through the county MHP and provide the name, address, and telephone numbers (local and toll-free, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) of the MHP so that a Medi-Cal beneficiary can call the MHP to obtain more specific information about the program.

The State has or will be mailing the notice in both English and Spanish to all heads of household for Medi-Cal eligibles approximately one month prior to the implementation date of the program in the county. County welfare offices must make the notices available in English and Spanish, and any threshold language for that county, available to individuals who become eligible after the initial mailing. An initial supply of 500 copies of these notices will be sent to your county with this letter.

A threshold language is defined as 3,000 beneficiaries or 5 percent of the Medi-Cal population, whichever is lower, whose primary language is other than English according to the primary language of the beneficiary as indicated on the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS). If a county wishes to have the notice in a language other than the threshold language, a copy of the notice which may be duplicated as needed can be obtained in the following languages by contacting Ms. Elena Lara at (916) 657-0712:

English	Farsi	Russian	Cambodian	Tagalog
Spanish	Hmong	Mien	Cantonese	
Armenian	Korean	Laotian	Vietnamese	

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact Ms. Elena Lara of my staff at (916) 657-0712.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Frank S. Martucci, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch

Enclosures

Notice to Medi-Cal Beneficiaries
about
Mental Health Benefits

The Medi-Cal program is changing the way people with Medi-Cal, including children, adults and older adults, receive mental health services in California. This change will happen in Orange County on January 1, 1998.

Instead of people with Medi-Cal finding their own psychiatrist or therapist when they need mental health services from these kinds of providers, they will go to a mental health plan in each county for services. Mental health plans are managed care plans for mental health services. Mental health plans have already been providing people with Medi-Cal with mental health services in hospitals since 1995.

The mental health plan in Orange County is Orange ABC Behavioral Health Plan. Their address is 515 North Sycamore Street, Suite 609, Santa Ana, CA 92701. The toll-free number is 1-800-723-8641.

Most services will have to be approved ahead of time by the mental health plan before the psychiatrist or therapist can get paid for the service by Medi-Cal. This is a change from the regular Medi-Cal program. Approval by the mental health plan can happen quickly if a person needs mental health services right away. If a person needs to be admitted to a hospital for emergency mental health treatment, the hospital services do not have to be approved ahead of time.

When people with Medi-Cal think they may need mental health services, they should contact either their family doctor or the mental health plan. For most people with Medi-Cal currently receiving services from the county mental health system, there will be no change in how they get services. People with Medi-Cal currently receiving services from other psychiatrists or therapists should contact the psychiatrist, therapist, or mental health plan to make sure that needed services are approved.

People may call the mental health plan's toll-free number to get information about the mental health plan's services, including how people may get mental health services and what to do if they are unhappy about the services. The mental health plan has a brochure that also has that information. You may call the mental health plan to ask for a brochure or to ask for a list of the mental health plan's psychiatrists, therapists, and clinics.

This change does not affect your rights under Medi-Cal. People who believe they need services still have access to the county patients' rights advocate if they are concerned about their treatment. People with Medi-Cal will also have a right to submit a grievance to the mental health plan. People also have the right to request a Fair Hearing from the State within 90 days if they have a problem with denial, reduction, or termination of mental health services.