

COVID-19 County Operations Survey Summary

(Based on 51 county responses)

The Department of Health Care Services conducted a survey to gauge county operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency. While counties have adjusted their business operations to meet the Stay-at-Home Executive Order and social distancing requirements, county staff members are still available to assist Medi-Cal applicants and beneficiaries over the phone, by mail, and through limited in-person services. Medi-Cal applications are also available electronically via the respective Statewide Automated Welfare Systems (SAWS) portals and/or the California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment and Retention System (CalHEERS).

- **Phone Access:** All county offices remain available by phone Monday through Friday, with most available to receive calls 8:00am to 5:00pm. In addition, Los Angeles and Orange County call centers have extended hours and are available on Saturdays.
- **Office/Lobby Access:** 60 percent of counties have offices open to the public, though lobby access and in-person services are restricted. There is signage at the county offices directing the public on how to obtain services, and some offices have county staff placed in reception areas or near lobby entrances to triage and direct clients based on the type of in-person assistance needed.
- **In-Person Services:** For those county offices that remain open to the public, in-person assistance include: immediate need Medi-Cal, BIC card issuance, and mail/document pickup.
 - Approximately 40 percent of counties are available for in-person application interviews (appointments may be required).
- **Medi-Cal Applications:** Individuals can still apply for Medi-Cal through various access channels; by mail, fax, phone (county or Covered CA), electronically through the SAWS Portals or Covered CA/CalHEERS, and many have a drop box or mail slot at the county office to receive applications.
- **Submitting Verifications:**
 - All County offices accept verifications submitted/uploaded online to the SAWS Portal and/or CalHEERS Portal, and by mail.
 - Most Counties have a drop box or mail slot at the county office for individuals who want to submit paper verifications in-person.
- **Reporting Changes:** Beneficiaries can report changes over the phone, online through the portal(s), by mail or fax.
- **Messaging on How to Access Services:** Counties are primarily utilizing lobby or outdoor signage, website notification/messaging, social media and call center

(Interactive Voice Response [IVR]) messaging to inform applicants on how to access services.

Some Creative Solutions: Some County offices have developed inventive ways to ensure customers' needs are met:

- Some counties have set up phone banks in their office/lobbies for customers to use. These phones connect directly to an eligibility worker.
- One county set up a “Ring” doorbell at their office to triage customers.
- While some county staff are teleworking, many are still working in the county offices to scan documents, and assist the homeless and other individuals who do not have telephones, internet access or other means.
- Some counties have cross trained staff from other areas within the county to assist with the influx of cases. For instance, LA County redirected 150 “outreach” staff to processing Medi-Cal and CalFresh applications.