



DATE: May 18, 2026

Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information

Letter No.: I 26-17

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY MEDI-CAL PROGRAM SPECIALISTS/LIAISONS

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL REFERENCE MATERIALS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DENTAL BENEFITS FOR 19 AND OLDER MEMBERS NO LONGER ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL FULL SCOPE MEDI-CAL

The purpose of this Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter (MEDIL) is to provide counties with additional reference materials for the elimination of non-emergency dental benefits for members aged 19 and older, and are not eligible for federally funded full-scope Medi-Cal. Members who are under age 19, pregnant or within one year post-partum, and foster youth under age 26 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday will, continue to receive full-scope Medi-Cal, which includes non-emergency dental services.

Current law requires that effective July 1, 2026, Medi-Cal members aged 19 and older, and are not eligible for federally funded full-scope Medi-Cal, will no longer receive full-scope dental coverage. These members will only be eligible for emergency dental services. Emergency dental services include treatment for severe pain, infections, injuries, and other urgent conditions.

The following enclosures are included in this letter:

- Medi-Cal Dental Benefit Changes – Frequently Asked Questions
 - This document provides additional clarification regarding the elimination of non-emergency dental benefits for members aged 19 and older, and are not eligible for federally funded full-scope Medi-Cal.



May 18, 2026

- Member Notices
 - This document includes the information that is being provided to members regarding the upcoming changes to their dental benefits.
- Medi-Cal Dental Coverage Changes – Call Script
 - This script was developed for use at the Health Care Options Call Center and Dental Call Center to address questions regarding the elimination of non-emergency dental benefits for members aged 19 and older, and are not eligible for federally funded full-scope Medi-Cal.

If you have any questions, or if you require further information, please email the Medi-Cal Dental Services Division at dental@dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Sarah Crow, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Division

Enclosures

MEDI-CAL DENTAL BENEFIT CHANGES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION



Here are answers to questions about the end of dental benefits for some adult Medi-Cal members:

1. How will Medi-Cal benefits change starting on January 1, 2026?

Starting on **January 1, 2026**, some adults cannot get full-scope Medi-Cal coverage, including dental, vision, and other services. This is based on their immigration status. The change applies to adults aged 19 and older who are not pregnant or within one year postpartum (after pregnancy).

If this applies to you, you will qualify for restricted-scope Medi-Cal only. It covers emergency care, including dental emergencies and pregnancy-related services. If you are under 26 years old and were in foster care on your 18th birthday, your dental services will not change.

To find out if the change affects you, go to: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/changes.aspx>

2. How will dental benefits change on July 1, 2026?

Starting **July 1, 2026**, Medi-Cal will not cover regular dental services for some adults, except emergencies. This is based on their immigration status. The change applies to members ages 19 and older who do not qualify for full-scope Medi-Cal (read question #1) and are not pregnant or within one year postpartum (after pregnancy). If you are under age 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday, your dental services will not change.

How change affects you:

- If you applied for Medi-Cal **before January 1, 2026**, you can use your full dental benefits until **June 30, 2026**. Starting on July 1, 2026, your coverage will be called full-scope Medi-Cal with no dental. If you were enrolled in a Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan), you will be disenrolled.
- If you applied for Medi-Cal on or after January 1, 2026, you will qualify for restricted scope Medi-Cal only. This covers emergencies, including dental-related services, pregnancy-related services, and some nursing home care.

Note: The change does **not** affect:

- Children under age 19 and pregnant people. They will keep full Medi-Cal with dental.
- Foster youth under age 26 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. They will keep dental benefits.

3. Which immigrants will not get Medi-Cal with dental coverage?

The change only affects immigrants whose status does not get federally qualified funding for their Medi-Cal. To learn more, go to <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/immigration-status-categories.aspx>.

4. What emergency dental services does full-scope Medi-Cal with no dental cover?

Covered emergency dental services are those treatments needed right away to stop severe pain or to diagnose and treat sudden serious medical problems. Serious problems are those that could cause serious harm or death if not treated right away. Emergency dental services can be for:

- Bleeding in your mouth that does not stop
- Painful swelling in or around your mouth
- A toothache or jaw pain
- Injuries to your face or jawbone
- Infection in your gums or teeth with pain or swelling
- After-surgery care (like bandage changes or stitch removal)
- A broken or knocked-out tooth
- Cutting or fixing wires in braces that hurt your cheeks or gums

To learn more, go to *Smile, California* at: <https://smilecalifornia.org/common-questions-2/what-should-i-do-if-i-have-a-dental-emergency/>.

5. If I am pregnant and not sure if I qualify for Medi-Cal dental benefits, what should I do?

If you are pregnant, call or go to your local county Medi-Cal office. Speak with a county eligibility worker. Full-scope Medi-Cal covers you during pregnancy and for one year postpartum (after pregnancy). It includes dental services. The county eligibility worker will tell you if they need any information from you.

6. If I am pregnant or one-year postpartum (after pregnancy), can I stay in my Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan)?

No. You will leave your Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan) and go to the Medi-Cal Dental Program (fee-for-service). You will still have dental coverage. To learn more and find a dentist, go to [SmileCalifornia.org](https://smilecalifornia.org).

7. If I am a foster child, foster youth, or former foster youth under age 26 who was in foster care on my 18th birthday, can I stay in my Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan)?

No. You will leave your Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan) and go to the Medi-Cal Dental Program (fee-for-service). You will still have dental coverage. To learn more and find a dentist, go to: **SmileCalifornia.org**.

8. Do I need to do anything when my Medi-Cal changes to full-scope with no dental?

Your coverage should change automatically. If you get a Medi-Cal renewal packet in the mail, fill it out. Send it back by the due date. You can call your county Medi-Cal office for help. To avoid losing Medi-Cal benefits, answer all county requests.

9. What if I am getting dental treatment when the change happens?

If you are getting dental care now and you:

- Do not qualify for full-scope Medi-Cal with dental benefits, and
- Are not pregnant or in the first year after a pregnancy, or
- Are not under age 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday:

You can keep getting your dental care until **June 30, 2026**. Starting **July 1, 2026**, only emergency dental services will be covered.

10. Do I need to choose a new dentist when my Medi-Cal changes to full-scope coverage with no dental?

If you have a dental emergency, you can go to any Medi-Cal dentist. To find a Medi-Cal dental dentist near you, call Medi-Cal Dental at **1-800-322-6384**. Or go to **<https://dental.dhcs.ca.gov/find-a-dentist/home>**.

11. Will coverage change for new or current Medi-Cal members who are under age 19 and do not qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal?

No. Regardless of immigration status, they will keep full-scope Medi-Cal. This includes dental services.

12. Will new or current Medi-Cal members aged 19 and older who don't qualify for federal full-scope qualify for dental services?

No. Starting **July 1, 2026**, adults aged 19 and older who don't qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal will only get emergency dental services. You will only keep full-scope Medi-Cal with dental services if you are pregnant or in the first year after pregnancy. If you are under 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday, your dental services will not change.

13. Where can I get more help?

If you need help in a language other than English, call your county Medi-Cal office. If you need written Medi-Cal information in another format, Medi-Cal has Braille, large print, audio, data CD, or other accessible formats to help you understand your letters or fill out your forms. To get this:

- Go to <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/Alternative-Formats.aspx>.
- Call **1-833-284-0040** (California Relay 711). The call is free.

If you need information about immigration status and Medi-Cal eligibility, go to <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/immigration-status-categories.aspx>

For other help, call:

- Dental Services – **1-800-322-6384** (TTY 1-800-735-2922)
- Mental Health Services – **1-800-896-4042** (TTY 1-800-896-2512)
- Substance Use Disorder Services – **1-800-879-2772** (TTY 711)
- Long-Term Services and Supports – **1-916-552-9105** (TTY 1-800-430-7077)
- Fee-for-Service or General Member Questions – **1-800-541-5555** (TTY 1-800-430-7077)

14. Where can I learn more about how my immigration status affects my Medi-Cal coverage?

DHCS and county Medi-Cal offices cannot answer questions about immigration status or public charge. If you have questions about your immigration status and Medi-Cal benefits, talk to a qualified immigration lawyer.

Other resources are:

- California Department of Social Services – Immigration Services Bureau. To get a list of nonprofit organizations that help immigrants in California, go to: <https://bit.ly/immigration-service-contractors>.
- Health Consumer Alliance (HCA). To find out if you qualify for free legal help with health-related issues such as problems getting or keeping coverage and problems with a health plan. Call **1-888-804-3536**.
- California Health and Human Services Agency Public Charge Guide. To learn about public charge rules, go to: <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/public-charge-guide/>.
- California's immigration resource page. To learn more, go to: <https://www.ca.gov/immigration/>.

15. Where can I learn more about Medi-Cal eligibility?

- **For general questions**, call the Medi-Cal Help Line Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except on State holidays) at **1-800-541-5555**. The call is free.
- **For help with managed care plan questions**, call the Medi-Cal Ombudsman Office. They help members understand their benefits and rights. They are open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except on State holidays). Call **1-888-452-8609** (TTY: 711 for California State Relay). The call is free.
- **To find an office near you**, go to **www.DHCS.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx**.
- **Call Medi-Cal Health Care Options (HCO)** Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **1-800-430-4263** (TTY: 1-800-430-7077). The call is free. Or go to Medi-Cal HCO at **www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov**. Medi-Cal HCO can help with Medi-Cal health and dental plan choices.
- **For questions about your dental plan**, call your Medi-Cal Dental Plan. The phone number is on the back of your Medi-Cal Dental Plan card. The call is free.
- **For changes to the scope of Medi-Cal coverage** based on immigration status, email **ImmigrationPolicy@dhcs.ca.gov**.
- **To learn more**, go to: **<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/changes.aspx>**.

16. Where can I learn more about dental services?

- **Phone:** Call Medi-Cal dental service center Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except State holidays) at **1-800-322-6384**. The call is free.
- **Online:** Go to the *Smile, California* website at **<https://smilecalifornia.org/>**.

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JOHN SAMPLE 1234
SAMPLE STREET
ANYTOWN CA 90000

Dear Medi-Cal Member,

Starting on **July 1, 2026**, Medi-Cal will stop covering dental services for some adult members, except for emergencies. This change is based on immigration status. The change only affects Medi-Cal members who are aged 19 and older and do not qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal.

To find out if the change applies to you, read the Immigration Status Chart at: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/immigration-status-categories.aspx>.

You will keep full-scope Medi-Cal with dental benefits regardless of your immigration status if:

- You are pregnant (and up to one year after the pregnancy ends), or
- You are under age 19, or
- You are under age 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday

If you do not qualify for full-scope Medi-Cal with dental benefits, you can get emergency dental services.

What are emergency dental services?

Emergency dental services are treatments needed right away to stop severe pain or diagnose and treat sudden, serious medical problems. Emergency dental services can be for:

- Bleeding that does not stop
- Painful swelling in or around your mouth
- A toothache or jaw pain
- Injuries to your face or jawbone
- Infection in your gums or teeth with pain or swelling

- After surgery care (such as bandage changes or stitch removal)
- A broken or knocked-out tooth
- Cutting or fixing wires in braces that hurt your cheeks or gums

To learn more about emergency services, go to: <https://smilecalifornia.org/common-questions-2/what-should-i-do-if-i-have-a-dental-emergency/>.

What do I need to know?

- If this change affects you, you can use your Medi-Cal dental benefits until **June 30, 2026**. Starting July 1, 2026, you will no longer have full-scope dental benefits and may be disenrolled from your Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan).
- If you have a dental emergency, you can go to a Medi-Cal dental provider for care.
- To find a Medi-Cal dentist near you, go to: <https://dental.dhcs.ca.gov/find-a-dentist/home>. Or call Medi-Cal Dental at **1-800-322-6384**.
- To learn more about Medi-Cal Dental, go to: <https://smilecalifornia.org/>.
- If your immigration status changes, contact your local county Medi-Cal office to find out if you may qualify for dental services. Find your local county Medi-Cal office information at: dhcs.ca.gov/COL.
- To report that you are pregnant or are within 12 months after your pregnancy ended, contact your local county Medi-Cal office.
- You will keep your Medi-Cal Dental benefits and be moved to the Medi-Cal Dental Program (fee-for-service) for your full dental benefits if you are:
 - Pregnant or one-year postpartum (after pregnancy), and/or
 - A foster child/youth or former foster youth under age 26 who was in foster care on your 18th birthday

Learn more about Medi-Cal Dental

For answers to questions about which immigration statuses the changes affect, read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below or go to <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/Medi-Cal-Dental-Benefit-Changes-Frequently-Asked-Questions.aspx>



For more help:

- Call the Medi-Cal Dental Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except State holidays) at **1-800-322-6384**. The call is free.
- For questions about eligibility, benefits, and services, call the Medi-Cal Help Line Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except State holidays) at **1-800-541-5555**. The call is free.
- For help using your benefits and understanding your rights, email **MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov**. Or call **1-888-452-8609** (TTY: 711 for California State Relay), Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., except State holidays. The call is free. Or, go to: **<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/mh-ombudsman.aspx>**.
- For help choosing health and dental plans, call Medi-Cal Health Care Options (HCO) Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **1-800-430-4263** (TTY: 1-800-430-7077). The call is free. Or go to Medi-Cal HCO at **www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov**.
- For questions about your dental plan, call the number on the back of your Medi-Cal Dental Plan card. The call is free.
- To learn more about Medi-Cal program changes, go to: **<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/changes.aspx>**.
- For questions about changes to the scope of Medi-Cal coverage based on immigration status, email **ImmigrationPolicy@dhcs.ca.gov**.
- To find your local county office, go to: **dhcs.ca.gov/COL**.

Thank you,

Department of Health Care Services

MEDI-CAL DENTAL COVERAGE CHANGES



Date: March 11, 2026

BACKGROUND:

Medi-Cal coverage is changing because of a new California law. **Starting July 1, 2026**, Medi-Cal will no longer cover dental services, except in emergency situations, for individuals aged 19 and older who do not qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal based on their immigration status. Members who are pregnant and up to one year after the pregnancy ends, or under age 26 and who were in foster care on their 18th birthday, will continue to receive dental services. Members who became eligible for Medi-Cal before January 1, 2026, can use their full dental benefits until June 30, 2026. Starting on July 1, 2026, their coverage will be called full-scope Medi-Cal with no dental. **Full-scope Medi-Cal with no dental includes all current Medi-Cal benefits except dental services. Members with this coverage remain eligible for emergency dental services.**

References:

Notices: [Medi-Cal Dental Benefit Changes - Notice](#)

FAQ: [Medi-Cal Dental Benefit Changes Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Member	Agent
Why is this change happening?	Based on the 2025-26 May Revision, starting July 1, 2026, Medi-Cal will stop covering dental services for some adult members, except for emergencies. The change only affects Medi-Cal members who are aged 19 and older, and do not qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal based on their immigration status.
What is changing with my Medi-Cal coverage in 2026?	Starting July 1, 2026, Medi-Cal will no longer cover dental services except in emergency situations. Your coverage will be called full scope Medi-Cal with no dental , which includes all current services <i>except</i> for dental care —only emergency dental services will be covered.

Member	Agent
What happens if I am disenrolled from my Dental Managed Care Plan?	<p>If you are disenrolled and not eligible for federal full scope Medi-Cal, your dental benefits depend on your age, pregnancy status, and whether you are a former foster youth.</p> <p>Members aged 19 and older and are not pregnant or postpartum or are not former foster youth will only receive care for dental emergencies from any fee-for-service Medi-Cal Dental provider.</p> <p>Members who are aged 19 and older who are pregnant or postpartum are eligible for full scope dental services from any fee-for-service Medi-Cal Dental provider.</p> <p>Former foster youth under age 26 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday are eligible to receive full-scope dental services from any fee-for-service Medi-Cal Dental provider.</p> <p>To learn more and find a dentist, go to SmileCalifornia.org.</p>
Will I lose my Medi-Cal coverage because of this change?	<p>No. Your eligibility will continue without interruption as long as you remain eligible for Medi-Cal. If you do not qualify for federal full-scope Medi-Cal, your dental services are removed unless you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant (including up to one year after the pregnancy ends), • Under age 19, or • Under age 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday.
Can I still use my dental benefits before July 1, 2026?	<p>Yes. You may continue using your dental services until June 30, 2026.</p>

Member	Agent
<p>What happens if I am in the process of receiving dental treatment when the change goes into effect?</p>	<p>If you are getting dental care now and you are in the process of receiving a dental treatment when the changes goes into effect, you will not be able to proceed with treatment unless it's an emergency. We encourage you to seek and complete any necessary treatments before July 1, 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>What services are still covered under full scope Medi-Cal with no dental?</p>	<p>You'll still continue to receive emergency services as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bleeding that does not stop • Painful swelling in or around your mouth • A toothache or jaw pain • Injuries to your face or jawbone • Infections in your gums or teeth with pain or swelling • After surgery care (such as bandage changes or stitch removal) • A broken or knocked out tooth • Cutting or fixing wires in braces that hurt your checks or gums • To learn more about Medi-Cal benefits, go to https://bit.ly/medi-cal-ehb-benefits.
<p>Will pregnant members still get dental coverage?</p>	<p>Yes. If you are pregnant or within one year after the pregnancy ends, you will continue to receive full scope Medi-Cal, which includes dental services, during your pregnancy and up to one year after the pregnancy ends.</p>
<p>If I am a foster child, foster youth, or former foster youth under age 26 who was in foster care on my 18th birthday, can I stay in my Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan)?</p>	<p>No. If you are 19 or older, you will leave your Medi-Cal Dental Plan (Dental Managed Care Plan) and go to Medi-Cal Dental Fee-for-Service. You will still have dental coverage.</p> <p>To learn more and find a dentist, go to: SmileCalifornia.org.</p>

Member	Agent
<p>Where can I learn more about Medi-Cal eligibility or get help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For general questions, call the Medi-Cal Help Line Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except on State holidays) at 1-800-541-5555. The call is free. • For help with managed care plan questions, call the Medi-Cal Ombudsman Office. They help members understand their benefits and rights. They are open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except on State holidays). Call 1-888-452-8609 (TTY: 711 for California State Relay). The call is free. • To find a Medi-Cal eligibility office near you, go to www.DHCS.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx. • Call Medi-Cal Health Care Options (HCO) for help with Medi-Cal health and dental plan choices. Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 1-800-430-4263 (TTY: 1-800-430-7077). The call is free. Or go to Medi-Cal HCO at www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov. • For questions about your dental plan, call your Medi-Cal Dental Plan. The phone number is on the back of your Medi-Cal Dental Plan card. The call is free. • For questions regarding changes to the scope of Medi-Cal coverage based on immigration status, email ImmigrationPolicy@dhcs.ca.gov. • To learn more about Medi-Cal changes go to: https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/changes.aspx. • To learn more about dental services, go to the Smile, California website at https://smilecalifornia.org/.

Member	Agent
I have additional questions about my dental coverage, who can I speak with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may call: Medi-Cal dental service center Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except State holidays) at 1-800-322-6384. The call is free.• You may also go to the Smile, California website at https://smilecalifornia.org• For questions about your dental plan, call your Medi-Cal Dental Plan. The phone number is on the back of your Medi-Cal Dental Plan card.