



# News Release

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## **CALIFORNIA ROLLING OUT INCENTIVES TO BOOST MEDI-CAL VACCINATION RATES**

SACRAMENTO -- The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today announced the availability of \$350 million in incentive payments to encourage vaccinations among Medi-Cal's 14 million beneficiaries. The vaccination incentive program will also encourage significantly expanded outreach in underserved communities.

"Health equity is of paramount importance to us, and that includes access to vaccines," said DHCS Director Will Lightbourne. "Raising COVID-19 vaccination rates among Medi-Cal beneficiaries is essential for those individuals and the state as a whole. California will only be safe when everyone is safe."

As of July 18, 45.6 percent of Medi-Cal beneficiaries aged 12 and over had received at least one vaccine shot compared to more than 76 percent of Californians as a whole.

The new program to boost vaccination rates will allow Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs) to earn incentive payments for activities that are designed to close vaccination gaps with their members, based upon lessons learned thus far in the pandemic. Funding will incentivize outreach programs and activities by MCPs and their providers, particularly primary care providers and pharmacies, as well as engage with trusted community organizations, such as food banks, advocacy groups, and faith-based organizations. After an initial payment for start-up costs, additional MCP payments will be conditional upon meeting specific vaccination goals. There will also be funding for MCPs to provide direct member incentives, such as grocery store gift cards, to Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

"We're working extremely hard to improve vaccination rates, but we believe we can do better, and must do better, to prevent further disparities in COVID-19 infection and death among persons served by Medi-Cal," said State Medicaid Director Jacey Cooper.

The incentive program will run from September 2021 through February 2022. DHCS is using \$175 million in state General Funds and an additional \$175 million in federal funds.

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“We have identified several large groups of Medi-Cal beneficiaries who have been disproportionately challenged as COVID vaccines are distributed, and our incentive program will help remedy that situation,” said Cooper. “Those particularly challenged groups include the homebound, people aged 50-64 with multiple chronic diseases, communities of color, and youth aged 12-25.”

MCPs provide case and care management services for Medi-Cal members and are well positioned to provide enhanced coordination services, partner with primary care providers, and conduct outreach for vaccine distribution to their members.

This vaccination incentive program to support local, community-based providers through MCPs can be coupled to the current [CalVaxGrant](#) program, which offers up to \$55,000 in grant funding to help physician practices vaccinate their communities against COVID-19. Funding for the CalVaxGrant program is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, so early application submissions are encouraged. Applications will be accepted until September 10, 2021.

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