

Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

(Virtual Meeting)

Participants:

- Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee (MMAC) Members: 18 of 18 members
- Department of Health Care Services (DHCS): Michelle Baass, René Mollow, Susan Philip, Sarah Brooks, Lindy Harrington, Anastasia Dodson, Joseph Billingsley, Erika Cristo, Brian Hansen, Maria Romero-Mora
- Meeting Facilitators: Everyday Impact Consulting (EIC)
- Guest Speakers: Franceska Gamez, Artist and Co-Founder of 1810 Gallery

Materials: Agenda and Presentation

Optional Prep-meeting – Language Justice Orientation (15 minutes)

Attendees were assisted with connecting via Zoom and informed about interpretation availability and other meeting logistics.

Welcome

DHCS Director Michelle Baass opened the meeting with welcoming remarks. She wished the group a happy new year and expressed her gratitude for members' continued engagement in the MMAC meetings. She spoke about the good news that, as part of the proposed fiscal year 2024-25 California budget released earlier that day, the Newsom Administration is continuing to prioritize funding for health care, specifically for the Medi-Cal program. The commitment to sustaining investments in Medi-Cal support for members was underscored with an optimistic outlook on the upcoming budget discussions. Michelle then briefly went over the agenda for the meeting, including the main discussion topic: the Medi-Cal appeals, State Fair Hearing, and grievance processes.

Land Acknowledgement and Grounding Activity

A land acknowledgement and grounding activity was provided by EIC.

Recap and Check-Ins

EIC shared news that three new MMAC members were joining for the first time. They introduced themselves and joined the other 15 members in sharing one thing they are looking forward to in 2024. Member responses included more abundance, productivity, organization, learning, growth, peace, and giving back to their community.

EIC provided a recap of the October 2023 MMAC meeting, which focused on Medi-Cal transformation through CalAIM (specifically, Community Supports and Enhanced Care Management). Following the recap, Anastasia Dodson, Deputy Director for the Office of Medicare Innovation and Integration, and Sarah Brooks, Chief Deputy Director for Health Care Programs, introduced themselves and the work they oversee within DHCS.

Large Group Discussion:

EIC introduced the Medi-Cal appeal, State Fair Hearing, and grievance processes as the group discussion topic, and invited René Mollow, Deputy Director of Health Care Benefits and Eligibility, to provide an overview of these processes and related member rights. It was stressed that Medi-Cal members have [rights](#) to voice their discontent about decisions that are made on their behalf, and pursuing an appeal, a State Fair Hearing or grievance should not have an impact on a member's benefits in the Medi-Cal program.

Members engaged in the following discussions:

- A member expressed that there must be more clarity, communication and education about the process to follow when requesting a State Fair Hearing and what to do when receiving a notice of action. The member also noted they feel like there is information and simplification, as there is currently overload from lengthy and numerous notices being mailed. Inform the public in a simple manner to support members.
- A member shared their experience of arriving late at home due to a medical appointment and missing a scheduled phone call that resulted in them being terminated from their benefits, having to reapply, and getting their benefits back a month and a half later. The member shared their concern about how fast their benefits were terminated and asked if they were allowed to have legal representation as they navigated these processes.
- One member asked about resources across counties to help Medi-Cal members navigate these processes. This member also wanted to hear specific examples of results from appeals that are made, as well as plans of action. The member asked about required posting notices at medical offices and in behavioral health offices.
- Regarding the notices and information mailed, a member shared that it was too cumbersome for their parents on Medi-Cal to access information in their native language, including via phone. Additionally, they asked how concerns about retaliation are addressed when filing appeals and grievances, since their parents would feel too concerned about losing access to their doctor if they complained about their care. More awareness is needed that there won't be repercussions.
- A member expressed that providers who handle paperwork for the appeals process file it incorrectly, resulting in a denial of services, such as home nursing for disabled children. The member asked if providers can be more cooperative with submitting appeals-related documents since there is a mismatch between how the system should work and how it is actually working. All of the burden is placed on families to prevent their services from ending.
- A member stressed the importance of receiving important documents in their preferred language, especially when they are being notified they may lose coverage.
- After filing a grievance, a member shared they experienced retaliation. The member recommended that there be an avenue for raising concerns and filing policy-related grievances anonymously. The member also requested information on the obligation of family health centers to assist with filling out paperwork.

- Multiple members expressed it would be useful to reference an easy to understand step by step guide for the appeals process and other processes that they could share with family and community members to increase awareness about the filing processes for appeals, grievances, or request a State Fair Hearing.
- A member highlighted that promotoras can conduct services to help with appeals, assist community members with reading letters in their language, and engage more people in supporting members in rural areas. The member recommended that more support be given to facilitate this process for promotoras.

René Mollow, Sarah Brooks, Erika Cristo, Brian Hansen, and Joseph Billingsley engaged with MMAC members to provide more context or clarification, provided answers to member concerns, and asked follow-up questions. The discussion was well received by members, and a member stated feeling “heard and seen.”

Next Steps

EIC presented on action items, post-meeting surveys, and information about the next meeting on May 15, 2024.

Closing Activity

Artist Franceska Gamez introduced herself to the group and summarized the themes she heard members share from their hopes and dreams for 2024 and throughout the meeting. Franceska shared that she will be using inspiration from these themes and discussions to produce a painting that she will share with members at the next meeting.

Closing Remarks

Michelle delivered closing remarks. She thanked members for an engaging meeting and for their direct, specific feedback on Medi-Cal appeal, State Fair Hearing, and grievance processes. She asked that members provide feedback on the shared Know Your Rights document, so DHCS can ensure members are aware of their rights, have access to services, and continue building healthy communities.