

DATE: [Month] [X], 2025

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 25-0XX
Supersedes BHIN No: 24-034 effective January 1, 2026

TO: California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators
California Association of Alcohol & Drug Program Executives, Inc.
California Association of DUI Treatment Programs
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California Hospital Association
California Opioid Maintenance Providers
California State Association of Counties
Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Associations
County Behavioral Health Directors
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
County Drug & Alcohol Administrators

SUBJECT: Integrated Behavioral Health Member Handbook Requirements and Templates

PURPOSE: This Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) informs county Mental Health Plans (MHPs), Drug Medi-Cal (DMC) counties, and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) counties of the requirements related to the integrated member handbook templates for the 2026 calendar year. The integrated member handbook templates are included as enclosures.

REFERENCE: [42 CFR § 438.10](#); [Welf. & Inst. Code § 14184.102\(d\)](#)

BACKGROUND:

Historically, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties were required to distribute member handbooks under the 2016 Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Managed Care Final Rule (Final Rule)¹, which aimed to align the Medicaid managed care regulations with requirements for other major sources of coverage. The 2016 Final Rule stipulates the requirements for the format, content, and distribution of member handbooks.

¹ Title 42, CFR, Section 438.10

Effective January 1, 2026, MHPs and DMC-ODS counties, as well as DMC counties (hereafter jointly referred to as “Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems”) must disseminate to their members an integrated member handbook based on one of the templates included as enclosures to this BHIN.

To the extent that there is a conflict between the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system’s contract or Intergovernmental Agreement terms and this BHIN, the policy contained within this BHIN supersedes the contract terms.

POLICY:

Member Handbook Templates

In accordance with 42 CFR § 438.10, and the requirements specified in this BHIN, Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must offer each member a handbook at the time the member first accesses services.

Integrated Member Handbook

To improve health care outcomes and experiences of Medi-Cal members, particularly individuals living with co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) requires Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems to develop and distribute integrated member handbooks. An integrated member handbook will streamline and strengthen:

- The member’s experience with county and county-contracted providers when seeking behavioral health services;
- Internal county structures and processes regarding program administration and data management; and
- DHCS’ oversight of county operations.

DHCS has developed two integrated member handbook templates for:

1. MHP and DMC Counties (Enclosure 1).
2. MHP and DMC-ODS Counties (Enclosure 2).

These integrated member handbook templates contain information that will assist the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems in developing handbooks that clearly describe for the member how to effectively access services and list all federally required information for handbooks². DHCS has incorporated the Notice of Availability of Language Assistance Services and Auxiliary Aids and Services, formerly known as Language Taglines, (Enclosure 3 of this BHIN) and Non-Discrimination Notice (Enclosure 4 of this BHIN) into the provided templates (Enclosures 1 and 2 of this BHIN).

² Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(g)

In addition, the handbook templates include the following sections:

- **Additional Information About Your County:** If there is any additional county-specific information that the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system would like to add, it should be included in this section as needed. If the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems include this section in their handbook, the title of the new section should match the title(s) from the handbook that the additional information complements. For example, “Additional Information About Medi-Cal Peer Support Services”.
- **Words to Know:** This section provides members with a list of terms utilized in the handbook templates and their meanings.
- **Notice of Privacy Practices:** This section informs members of their right to know how their protected health information may be used and disclosed, and what their privacy rights are. Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must include their Notice of Privacy Practices in this section.

Member Handbook Delivery Method

The handbook will be considered provided to the member if the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system delivers the handbook as required below:

1. Direct Delivery
 - a. A printed copy of the member handbook is mailed to the member’s mailing address.
 - Or*
 - b. A printed copy of the member handbook is directly offered during in-person interactions.
 - Or*
 - c. The Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system provides the member handbook via an electronic format (e.g., email, or text message that includes a hyperlink or QR code to the handbook from the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system’s website) after obtaining the member’s agreement to receive it electronically.

And

2. Website
 - a. The Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system must:

- Post the member handbook on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's primary website homepage³ in a manner that is readily accessible.⁴
- Advise the member in paper or electronic format (e.g., email, or text message that includes a hyperlink to the handbook on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's website), that the member handbook is available on the Internet and includes the applicable Internet address (e.g., this can be completed via the 30-day notification letter).
- Inform members the member handbook is available in paper form without charge upon request and provide the member handbook upon request within five (5) business days; and
- Provide members with disabilities who cannot access this information online with auxiliary aids and services upon request at no cost.

Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must provide additional handbooks to members upon request. For 2026, the member handbook templates have been updated to align with DHCS policies released between September 2024 through [month of this BHIN publication] 2025.

Notice of Significant Change(s) - Member Notification Requirement

The Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must also give each member notice of any significant change^{5,6} to the information contained in the handbook(s) at least 30 days before the intended effective date of the change.⁷

Below is a list of new services that the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must include in a notice of significant change letter. The notice of significant change provided to each member must include an issuance date of the notice, the effective date of the updated handbook, and the following types of new services (as applicable) such as, but not limited to:

³ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(c)(6)

⁴ Readily accessible means electronic information and services which comply with current accessibility standards including sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA and successor versions. (Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10.)

⁵ A change is considered significant when there is an increase or decrease in the amount or types of services that are available, or if there is an increase or decrease in the number of network providers, or if there is any other change that would impact the benefits available through the Plan.

⁶ Subsection (f) of section 1810.360 of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations is superseded.

⁷ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(g)(4)

1. Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
2. Functional Family Therapy (FFT)
3. Multisystemic Therapy (MST)
4. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
5. Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT)
6. Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) for First Episode Psychosis
7. Clubhouse Services
8. Enhanced Community Health Worker Services
9. Supported Employment
10. Traditional Health Care Practices

In addition, the Notice of Availability of Language Assistance Services and Auxiliary Aids and Services (Enclosure 3) and Non-Discrimination Notice (Enclosure 4) shall be included in the Notice of Significant Change.

Notice of Significant Change Delivery Method

At a minimum, the types of delivery options for the notice of significant change are required below:

1. Direct Delivery
 - a. Mail a printed notice to the member's mailing address.

Or

- b. Provide the notice in an electronic format (e.g., email, or text message that includes a hyperlink to the notice) after obtaining the member's agreement to receive it electronically.

Or

2. Website
 - c. If the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system chooses to post the 30-day notice on its website(s), the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system must:
 - Provide members the notice in paper via mail or electronic format (e.g., email, or text message that includes a hyperlink to the notice on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's website)⁸ and information on how to access the 30-day notice on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's website homepage.

⁸ After obtaining the member's agreement to receive it electronically.

- Ensure that the online notice is readily accessible on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's primary website homepage.
- Provide members with disabilities who cannot access this information online with auxiliary aids and services upon request at no cost.

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS:

Counties may claim for administrative costs for updating the Member Handbook, ensuring that members are informed about the available services and their rights as outlined in the following information notices: [DMH Letter 11-01](#) and/or [MH SUDS 14-033](#).

COMPLIANCE:

Effective January 1, 2026, Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must implement the integrated member handbook policies established above, ensure compliance with this policy, and provide updated handbooks to members. Before implementation, Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems may reach out to their DHCS BH County Liaison for technical assistance (TA) to ensure compliance with the policies established above.

Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must distribute the Notice of Significant Change, including the list of new services as described above, to members on or before December 1, 2025. Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must also comply with compliance monitoring reviews conducted by DHCS. A copy of the final 30-day Notice and member handbook(s) must be provided to the DHCS via the MOVEit secure file transfer protocol by January 30, 2026. DHCS may impose a corrective action plan, as well as administrative and/or monetary sanctions for non-compliance.⁹ For additional information regarding administrative and monetary sanctions, see [BHIN 25-023](#), and any subsequent iterations on this topic.

Please contact countysupport@dhcs.ca.gov for questions regarding this BHIN or its enclosures.

Sincerely,

Michele Wong, Chief
Behavioral Health Oversight and Monitoring Division

⁹ [Welf. & Inst. Code § 14197.7](#)

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Enclosures (4):

Enclosure 1 – Mental Health Plan and Drug Medi-Cal Member Handbook Template

Enclosure 2 – Mental Health Plan and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery Systems
Member Handbook Template

Enclosure 3 – Notice of Availability of Language Assistance Services and Auxiliary Aids
and Services

Enclosure 4 – Nondiscrimination Notice