



Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program Action Plan: 2024 Addendum

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Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program (HACCP) Overview

Program Overview

The [Budget Act of 2020](#) (Assembly Bill 89, Chapter 7, Statutes of 2020), authorized [HACCP](#), which launched on July 1, 2021. This new state-only program serves California children who are not eligible for Medi-Cal or hearing-related coverage through California Children's Services Program (CCS) and live in a household with income up to 600 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Children can qualify for HACCP regardless of immigration status. Without medically necessary hearing aids, deaf and hard-of-hearing children are at high risk for developmental and educational delays. Children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing must be able to utilize every medical assistance and device available to ensure continued learning. HACCP was initially available to children under 18 without insurance or whose insurance does not cover hearing aids and related services. Effective January 1, 2023, the [Budget Act of 2022](#) (Assembly Bill 179, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022) expanded the age criteria for HACCP to children under the age of 21, and broadened coverage to children who had other insurance with coverage of \$1,500 or less for hearing aids. After accounting for this expansion to program eligibility criteria and the ongoing outreach efforts described below, although smaller than initial estimates, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) anticipates that the HACCP enrollment will continue to increase steadily until it reaches a natural equilibrium.

Benefit Structure and Reimbursement: HACCP uses the Medi-Cal fee-for-service (FFS) [billing and claims structure](#), [FFS provider network](#), and [reimbursement rates](#). HACCP covers hearing aid-related audiology and diagnostic assessments, hearing aids, including assistive listening devices (ALDs) and surface-worn bone conduction hearing devices (BCHDs); supplies, including ear molds and hearing aid batteries; medically necessary hearing aid accessories; and post-evaluation and follow-up services. For a more comprehensive list of covered services, see DHCS' [HACCP Provider Manual](#).

Eligibility and Case Management: DHCS has procured the services of administrative vendor, Maximus, to conduct eligibility determinations and perform ongoing case management for this program on behalf of the Department. The responsibilities of Maximus include the following: 1) performing case intake by reviewing applications to approve/deny applicants for program enrollment, 2) enrolling approved children into the program, 3) operating a call center, 4) developing required program informing and other related

materials, 5) maintaining a database for ongoing case management purposes, and 6) conducting program monitoring and oversight, as well as related reporting.

HACCP Action Plan: DHCS’ Call to Action

On October 7, 2023, Governor Newsom returned [Senate Bill 635](#) (Menjivar and Portantino, 2023) to the California State Senate without his signature. The Governor’s [veto message](#) identified a need explore increases to Medi-Cal provider payments with the goal of incentivizing additional provider participation in HACCP. DHCS is currently conducting the initial phases of this exploration to determine feasible avenues to implement potential rate increases in a responsible and sustainable manner; however, DHCS would note that any changes to reimbursement rates would need to go through the State budget process. In addition, the Governor reiterated California’s commitment to ensuring deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children have access to services and supports they need, including hearing aids, and directed DHCS to take a variety of steps to help individuals maximize benefits. In response, DHCS has updated its existing HACCP Action Plan to incorporate recent program information as well as the Governor’s six enumerated steps, which are as follows:

- 1. Partner with other state entities to promote participation and awareness of HACCP;
- 2. Complete translations for HACCP-related materials into threshold languages;
- 3. Implement a streamlined annual eligibility review (AER) process to simplify enrollment;
- 4. Conduct outreach to Medi-Cal providers not yet participating in HACCP to support their participation;
- 5. Host quarterly webinars with providers and stakeholders; and
- 6. Continue to identify potential service improvements and strategies to increase HACCP success.

DHCS is updating its HACCP Action Plan to incorporate recent program information as well as to outline DHCS’ comprehensive strategy relative to ongoing HACCP improvements through 2024, particularly within the framework of the Governor’s six enumerated steps in his SB 635 veto message. This addendum to DHCS’ original HACCP Action Plan (February 2023) outlines DHCS’ continued efforts to increase awareness of and participation in HACCP, both from a provider participation and member enrollment perspective. The following table summarizes DHCS’ implementation strategies and timelines:

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1. Partner with other State entities to promote participation and awareness of HACCP.

- Partner with California Department of Education (CDE), DHCS' Medi-Cal Local Education Assistance – Billing Options Program, and large school districts to include HACCP materials with referrals generated from school hearing screenings and to educate school audiometrists about the program and DHH teachers and intervention providers.
- Partner with California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to cross-promote HACCP in relevant CDPH materials as well as on webpages, packets, and appropriate other publications.
- Partner with Department of Developmental Services (DDS) regarding comprehensive HACCP outreach to Early Start recipients and providers, Regional Centers, and Family Resource Center (FRC) staff.
- Partner with Covered California to identify opportunities for including and disseminating HACCP information directly to health plans and individuals obtaining health care coverage through the exchange.
- Partner with the Department of Social Service (CDSS) to explore potential outreach opportunities for increasing HACCP awareness through local referral and resource agencies associated with CDSS' childcare licensing program.
- Partner with Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) regarding opportunities to include provider outreach materials in audiology licensing renewal correspondence.

DHCS began this work in Fall 2022 and began expanding and enhancing its efforts in February 2023. DHCS has already held meetings with most of the state entities mentioned above to discuss opportunities for cross-promotion of HACCP, which includes, but is not limited to: inserting HACCP information into materials and information released by other state entities to California residents and providers; integration of HACCP into existing state processes to potentially streamline and simplify eligibility determinations and enrollment; and developing new materials for dissemination to other state entities, such as call center scripts, informational trainings/webinars, and more. DHCS will continue to work on various associated deliverables on an ongoing basis.

In addition to working with external State entities, DHCS has also worked internally to cross-promote HACCP within other programs, including updating the Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NHSP) website to reference HACCP, and going forward, is looking to make further updates to various internal resources and materials that are distributed to providers and members.

Action

2. Complete translations for HACCP-related materials into threshold languages.

- Ensure availability of [online application portal](#), HACCP correspondence related to eligibility determination or enrollment status, and HACCP Communications Toolkit in all 19 threshold languages: Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, English, Farsi, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Laotian, Mien, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.
- Additional flyers and materials, such as those for webinars or requested by Community Partners for specific events, will be available in threshold languages as requested or as most relevant to a particular event.

In December 2023, DHCS completed the translation of the HACCP online application portal and key program outreach [materials](#), including the HACCP Communications Toolkit and program overview brochure, into DHCS' 19 threshold languages. The DHCS website, including HACCP webpages, is also viewable in threshold languages available through Google Translate. Additionally, processes are in place to ensure that future informational materials can be made available in threshold languages going forward. DHCS will periodically review all HACCP-related materials to ensure they are up to date.

3. Implement a streamlined AER process.

- Each year, members must complete an [AER](#) to confirm their continued eligibility to remain enrolled in continuous coverage for hearing aids and related services through HACCP.
- The streamlined AER process incorporates a shorter form (compared to resubmitting an application) focused on documentation requirements on information most likely to change from one year to the next.
- The streamlined process will provide coordinated support for members during their AER window, such as reminder letters and outbound call campaigns.

DHCS plans to engage with key stakeholders in this space prior to making any final policy recommendations and decisions. DHCS anticipates completing this work and any associated deliverables sometime in Spring 2024.

Action

4. Conduct outreach to Medi-Cal providers not yet participating in HACCP to support their participation.

- To conduct strategic, intentional, and targeted outreach to relevant providers in a variety of settings, DHCS has completed a detailed data analysis of the top 50 Medi-Cal FFS providers with the highest claim volume and highest procedure counts for HACCP's covered benefits.
- DHCS will refresh the top 50 providers each quarter and conduct targeted program outreach (e.g., phone campaign, updated program materials) to Medi-Cal FFS providers not yet participating in HACCP. Outreach will focus on increasing provider awareness, addressing provider questions, and supporting engagement of relevant providers.
- DHCS will continue and expand its targeted outreach campaign to recruit these existing Medi-Cal FFS providers already rendering services for Medi-Cal (including CCS) members to actively serve HACCP members.
 - Outreach materials will include notices for upcoming provider webinars, materials promoting HACCP eligibility criteria and enrollment instructions, brochures for providers to display in their offices, and other resources available to support these providers' awareness and participation in HACCP.
- Broader outreach to Medi-Cal providers includes Provider Bulletins and Newsflashes to let Medi-Cal enrolled providers, regardless of specialty, know about resources like the [HACCP Provider Referral Form](#) for helping non-Medi-Cal patients referred for hearing-related services with accessing coverage through HACCP for those services.

DHCS completed an initial round of outreach to the top 50 Medi-Cal FFS providers in early 2023. DHCS plans to continue to utilize a data-driven approach to conduct additional Medi-Cal provider outreach in an effort to increase awareness of HACCP and encourage provider participation, which includes working internally to queue up a subsequent outreach at regular quarterly intervals in January, April, July, and October of 2024. Ultimately, this work involves continuous process improvement and DHCS will continue to work on various associated deliverables for this action item.

5. Host quarterly webinars with providers and stakeholders.

- ***HACCP Webinars for Medical Providers and Hearing Professionals*** are opportunities to present providers with information to help pediatric patients and their families to maximize the HACCP benefits. The training sessions will address the program requirements for families to apply for coverage and the claims submission process for audiologists, otolaryngologists, physicians, and their office staff. Current dates and times for 2024 include:
 - February 13, 2024, 12 – 1 PM Pacific Time (PT)
 - May 14, 2024, 12 – 1 PM PT August 15, 2024, 12 – 1 PM PT

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- November 12, 2024, 12 – 1 PM PT
- **HACCP Webinars for Families and Community Partners** share guidance with interested families about applying for hearing aid coverage and helps new members and their families to maximize their HACCP benefits once enrolled. These webinars also provide program updates and tools for stakeholders, educators, and other community partners to support families and children in accessing coverage through HACCP. Current dates and times for 2024 include:
 - March 13, 2024, 11 AM – 12 PM PT
 - June 5, 2024, 11 AM – 12 PM PT
 - September 12, 2024, 11 AM – 12 PM PT
 - December 3, 2024, 11 AM – 12 PM PT

Additionally, in December 2023, DHCS met with a smaller group of key advocates to discuss HACCP stakeholder engagement and has committed to ongoing, regularly occurring meetings to discuss and follow-up on important issues, including but not limited to those enumerated items within this Action Plan.

6. Continue to identify potential service improvements and strategies to increase program success.

- Update web content and organization for more contextual and intuitive navigation.
- Periodically re-review HACCP covered benefits to ensure completeness.
- Continue rollout of DHCS' updated visual identity resources in program materials.
- Improve clarity and relevance of [HACCP Program Data](#) (updated monthly).
- Enhance [HACCP Provider Locator](#) functionality, including options to:
 - View a complete list of provider listings without sorting by proximity.
 - Customize practice details when providers create or update their listing(s).
- Continue building relationships with provider organizations, including promoting program visibility by participating in or hosting exhibits at conferences and events.
- Continue to coordinate with CCS to ensure families who are ineligible for CCS (including those who are no longer eligible) are referred to HACCP as appropriate.

DHCS has been actively working to evaluate HACCP web content to ensure it is intuitive to navigate, easy to understand, and provides the appropriate level of detail. DHCS will make any necessary refinements on a flow basis. DHCS will also continue to develop new and refine existing HACCP materials in an effort to increase awareness. DHCS is working internally to take a deeper dive into HACCP data to undertake efforts to improve data quality and public reporting and plans to engage with key stakeholders to discuss potential

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changes in terms of how HACCP data is captured and reported. Lastly, DHCS will continue to foster its relationships with providers and other key partners. Ultimately, work involves continuous process improvement and DHCS will continue to work on various associated deliverables for this action item.