

**DATE:** October 7, 2024

**ALW PL:** 24-002

**TO:** Assisted Living Waiver (ALW) Providers and Care Coordination Agencies

**SUBJECT:** Release of ALW Slots and Waitlist Management

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy Letter is to provide guidance on the Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) policy for releasing ALW slots from the ALW waitlist.

### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the ALW is to keep eligible seniors and persons with disabilities in their communities and out of institutional care settings. On September 3, 2024, DHCS halted the direct submission of new ALW applications that meet the ALW Reserve Capacity for long-term care stays (institutional stay of 60 or more days) and will instead incorporate them into the existing ALW waitlist. DHCS currently has Waiver and budget authority for an additional 1,800 Waiver slots effective March 1, 2025 (Waiver year two). DHCS submitted a Waiver amendment to the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on October 2, 2024, to request Waiver authority to make the slot increase authorized for Waiver year two available in the current year.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- **Reserve Capacity:** The ALW prioritizes waitlist slots for Medi-Cal eligible individuals who meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - Individuals that have been residing in an institutional setting for more than 60 days and can safely transition to an assisted living facility or public subsidized housing.
  - Individuals with an imminent need for services as documented through referrals from Adult Protective Services (APS).
  - Individuals with an imminent need for services as documented through referrals from Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman.
- **Community Enrollment:** Any participant who does not meet the definition of Reserve Capacity will be treated as a Community Enrollment.

## **POLICY**

ALW eligible applicants on the waitlist will be assigned available Waiver slots in the following order, based on Reserve Capacity Waiver enrollment priority:

- 1) Individuals who have been residing in an institutional setting for at least 60 days at the time their waitlist request form is submitted DHCS.
- 2) Individuals with an imminent need as documented in an APS referral.
- 3) Individuals with an imminent need as documented in a LTC Ombudsman referral.
- 4) Individuals residing in the community at the time of submission of the ALW waitlist request and/or who do not meet the Reserve Capacity criteria above in 1), 2), or 3). Waiver applicants who do not meet Reserve Capacity eligibility criteria are processed and enrolled on a first-come, first-served basis.

DHCS will maintain the master waitlist, monitor for, and notify CCAs when Waiver slots become available. CCAs must screen all waitlist requests received for basic eligibility criteria and determine if they meet the criteria for Reserve Capacity within 7 calendar days of receipt. If the applicant is potentially eligible, they will be placed on the waitlist. CCAs will notify the applicant in writing within 3 calendar days of screening to confirm receipt of the ALW waitlist request, and the effective date of placement on the waitlist.

### **DHCS will release ALW waitlist slots as follows:**

- 1) To ensure that the continued Waiver growth aligns with the annual slot increases already included in the approved Waiver, DHCS will utilize a hybrid waitlist management option which will include:
  - Organizing the waitlist by the Reserve Capacity priorities as explained above and further organizing each Reserve Capacity category and Community category by the date they are placed on the waitlist.
  - Assigning slots to each CCA. The number of slots assigned will vary based on the information below and the number of Waiver slots available.
  - Applicants who meet Reserve Capacity criteria will be prioritized for enrollment and released in the following ratio:
    - 50% of total slots released allocated to individuals who have been residing in an institutional setting for at least 60 days.
    - 25% of total slots released allocated to individuals with an imminent need for services as documented through referrals from Adult Protective Services (APS).

- 25% of total slots released allocated to individuals with an imminent need as documented in a LTC Ombudsman referral.
  - DHCS will only release slots to Community applicants if there are remaining enrollment slots available.
- 2) The number of slots DHCS releases each month may vary based on the following:
  - Total number of Waiver slots available.
  - Waiver enrollment attrition.
  - Size of each CCAs waiting list.
- 3) DHCS will use the enrollment and waitlist information to calculate the slot assignments for CCAs.
- 4) DHCS will update the ALW waitlist monthly to ensure accurate census.
- 5) DHCS will provide waitlist information to CCAs.
- 6) DHCS will target to release available slots to CCAs on or prior the 10th of each month.
- 7) CCAs will have 60 days from the date they are notified of an available slot to submit a complete application or to notify DHCS that a member is no longer interested in the ALW program. An individual will only be closed for “no contact” once the CCA has provided documentation that a minimum of three (3) attempts were made to contact the individual as follows:
  - at least once per week over a three-week period,
  - at different times of day, and
  - on different days of the week.
- 8) CCAs will use the first sheet of the attached spreadsheet to document contact attempts and waitlist processing progress. The second sheet of the tracking document will autofill based on entries from the first sheet and will be used for high level performance tracking. A waitlist slot will be considered processed once one of the following occurs: the CCA confirms the individual has elected to decline Waiver services, the individual fails to respond to the CCA after three (3) contact attempts, or the individual submits a completed application to DHCS.
- 9) CCAs must process all released waitlist slots in the order the individual entered the waitlist.

### **CCA Responsibilities**

- 1) CCAs must regularly monitor their waitlists and ensure they are current and accurate. Providing incorrect information on the waitlist request form may cause enrollment delays.
- 2) CCAs must accept all waitlist request forms received and screen them for basic ALW Waiver eligibility and Reserve Capacity status within 7 calendar days of receipt. Once screening is completed, the CCA must immediately submit the waitlist request form to DHCS to place the member on the waitlist.

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- 3) CCAs must send written notification to the applicant within 3 calendar days of screening the waitlist request to confirm receipt of the ALW Waitlist Request form and provide the effective date of placement on the waitlist (i.e. date form was submitted to DHCS).
- 4) When a slot is released to an applicant who meets the Reserve Capacity criteria for institutional transfers, the CCA must confirm applicant resided in an institutional setting for 60 consecutive days. If the applicant met the long-term care requirement but has already transitioned to the community, the CCA will complete a community transition application but must include documentation that the applicant met the long-term care requirement prior to transitioning, i.e. SNF Face sheet, admission record, etc.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions regarding the requirements of this Policy Letter, please contact ISCD at [ALWP.IR@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:ALWP.IR@dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY**

Joseph Billingsley, Assistant Deputy Director  
Integrated Systems of Care  
Department of Health Care Services

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<sup>1</sup> To clarify, if an ALW applicant meets the long-term care requirement at the point that the waitlist request is submitted to DHCS, the ALW applicant will retain their status as a Reserve Capacity applicant, even if they transition to the community prior to the slot release.