



DATE: August 17, 2026

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 26-029
Supersedes BHIN No: 25-042 effective January 1, 2027

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 Behavioral Health Association
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 2027 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.

Effective January 1, 2027, 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(g)(1); 45 CFR § 164.520(c)(1), 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 within the behavioral health delivery system, and upon request thereafter.²

Integrated Member Handbook

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) requires Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems to develop and distribute integrated member handbooks to improve health care outcomes and experiences of Medi-Cal members, particularly individuals living with co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders. 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 Title 42, CFR, Section 438.10

² 42 CFR 438.10(g)(1) and 45 CFR 164.520(c)(1) requires Medicaid managed care plans to offer the member handbook at enrollment. Because Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems do not "enroll" members, the handbook is required be provided when the member first accesses services.

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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 handbooks³. 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).

The enclosed member handbook templates must not be altered or modified in any way, with the exception of designated areas where county-specific information is required. These areas are marked with brackets (e.g., [Name of County]) throughout the document. Additionally, Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems may include relevant information in the section titled "Additional Information About Your County" at the end of the handbook. 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". Additionally, if a county has opted to provide an optional service, the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system must indicate those services in this section.

For 2027, the member handbook templates have been updated to align with DHCS policies released between November 2025 through July 2026.

Member Handbook Delivery Method

The handbook will be considered provided to the member when 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.

³ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(g)

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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, including in all threshold languages for the county, on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's primary website homepage⁴ in a manner that is readily accessible.⁵
 - 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 that 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.

⁴ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(c), (d)(3)

⁵ 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.)

Notice of Significant Change(s) - Member Notification Requirement

The Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must also give each member that is receiving services from the behavioral health delivery system notice of any significant change^{6 7} to the information contained in the handbook(s) at least 30 days before the intended effective date of the change.⁸ For example, if the county opts-in to provide an optional service, (i.e Medi-Cal Peer Support specialist services or services available through the Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) initiative etc), then the county must update their handbook accordingly and issue a notice of significant change.

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 notification of any new Medi-Cal behavioral health services available to members such as, but not limited to:

1. Activity Funds
2. High Fidelity Wraparound

Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems do not need to include in their Notice of Significant Change any information about services that are optional that they have not opted in to. The Notice of Significant Change shall include: information on how members can obtain a copy of the member handbook, the Notice of Availability of Language Assistance Services and Auxiliary Aids and Services (Enclosure 3), and Non-Discrimination Notice (Enclosure 4).

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

⁶ A change is considered significant when there is an increase or decrease in the amount or types of services that are available within the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system, 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.

⁷ Subsection (f) of section 1810.360 of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations is superseded.

⁸ Title 42, CFR, Part 438.10(g)(4)

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- 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)⁹ and information on how to access the 30-day notice on the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery system's website homepage.
 - 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, 2027, 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 contact countysupport@dhcs.ca.gov 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, and information on how

⁹ After obtaining the member's agreement to receive it electronically.

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members can obtain a copy of the member handbook, to members on or before December 1, 2026 and 30 days prior to the effective date of any subsequent significant change.¹⁰

Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems are expected to meet compliance and demonstrate to DHCS their ability to comply with the handbook and noticing requirements as outlined in this BHIN. A copy of the final 30-day Notice must be provided to DHCS via the MOVEit secure file transfer protocol by February 1, 2027. DHCS may require the behavioral health delivery system to redistribute the 30-day Notice if the notice does not meet the requirements of this BHIN. Additionally, Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems must submit copies of the 30-Day Notice for any subsequent significant changes to the member handbook.

DHCS may impose a corrective action plan, as well as administrative and/or monetary sanctions for non-compliance.¹¹ 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 any questions regarding this BHIN or its enclosures.

Sincerely,

Michele Wong, Chief
Behavioral Health Oversight and Monitoring Division

Enclosures (4):

Enclosure 1 – MHP and DMC Member Handbook Template

Enclosure 2 – MHP and DMC-ODS Member Handbook Template

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

Enclosure 4 – Nondiscrimination Notice

¹⁰ As stated on page 5, if the county opts-in to provide an optional service, (i.e Medi-Cal Peer Support specialist services or services available through the Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) initiative etc), then the county must update their handbook accordingly and issue a notice of significant change.

¹¹ [Welf. & Inst. Code § 14197.7](#)