



DATE: May 16, 2023

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS Letter No.: 23-11  
ALL COUNTY WELFARE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS  
ALL COUNTY MEDI-CAL PROGRAM SPECIALISTS/LIAISONS  
ALL COUNTY HEALTH EXECUTIVES  
ALL COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY MEDS LIAISONS

SUBJECT: ALTERNATE METHOD FOR DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
APPLICANT/BENEFICIARY INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS  
(REFERENCE: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER [20-22](#),  
[MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY DIVISION INFORMATION LETTER I 14-19](#))

### Purpose

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to inform counties of an alternate method to distribute informational materials to applicants and beneficiaries who have documented that their preferred method for receiving county information is by email. All other applicants and beneficiaries shall receive hard copies of the materials in person or through the U.S. mail by default.

The guidance in this ACWDL is intended for counties that elect to initiate email distribution as well as the current mailing of informational materials. This ACWDL is not intended to require that counties develop a process to send informational materials by email.

### Background

Counties provide the informational materials required by [ACWDL 20-22](#) to all households when the county receives an application in person, by phone, by mail, through the online portal, or by other commonly available electronic means, and annually, to all Medi-Cal beneficiary households. Applications for insurance affordability programs ask the applicant to specify how they would like to get information about the application and email is an option.

Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) received county requests to develop additional distribution methods for applicant and beneficiary informational materials besides the normal distribution by U.S. mail or in person. Most recently, counties have raised concerns about increased costs for postage and paper in addition to more applicants/beneficiaries preferring county correspondence to be distributed electronically by email.

### **Updated Guidance**

With the release of this ACWDL, counties may now elect to send the informational materials described in [ACWDL 20-22](#) by email following the guidelines below. For counties electing to use email as an alternate method for distribution of informational materials, DHCS requires that counties only provide copies of the informational materials in Portable Document Format (PDF) and not use hyperlinks to the documents sent to applicants and beneficiaries by email. **Confidential information shall not be included in the email or in any attachments.**

DHCS previously issued [MEDIL 14-19](#) to provide guidance to counties when distributing electronic Notices of Action (eNOAs or e-notifications) through the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) secure personal online accounts. Counties that want to utilize this method for distribution of the informational materials described in [ACWDL 20-22](#) should contact their SAWS representative to develop a process to upload informational materials in the secure personal account of applicants/beneficiaries.

### **Emailing Informational Materials**

This guidance addresses counties' communication requirements when distributing informational materials electronically to applicants/beneficiaries by email.

- The applicant's preferred method of contact shall be captured through any available means such as online, telephone, mail, in-person, or other commonly available electronic means and documented in the SAWS.
- The county shall document in the case record the date that informational materials were distributed by email to the applicant or beneficiary's household.
- As best practice, counties shall send out a test email to confirm the applicant/beneficiary's email address is valid.
  - Test email shall state, "This is a test email from [X] county, no action is required on your part."
  - If a test email is rejected, a second attempt should be sent ensuring no typographical errors were made.
  - If the email provided is invalid, the county shall contact the applicant/beneficiary to confirm the correct email address.
  - Counties shall document in case files if the test email went through or not. If not, counties shall continue sending hard copies by U.S. mail.
  - If an applicant/beneficiary reports a new or updated email address, counties shall follow the above described procedures.
- The email with the informational materials shall be sent via a local county email address.

- The email language provided in this letter is only an example, counties are able to develop their own language at their discretion.
  - Counties shall include a confidentiality notice disclaimer in the email.
- DHCS highly recommends that counties who opt for this electronic option for sending informational materials confirm that the email communications are translated into their preferred threshold language to ensure the applicant/beneficiary understands the importance of the information being provided to them.
- Medi-Cal beneficiaries may opt in or opt-out of receiving email distribution of informational materials and receive a traditional hard copy through U.S. mail at **any** time by contacting their local county office or by logging into their BenefitsCal account and make the request from their account setting page by updating the choice of their preferred method of contact.
- Counties shall document all requests for informational material distribution changes in case files.
- Emails containing informational materials sent to Medi-Cal applicants/beneficiaries shall not include any Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- Counties shall only provide informational materials within the email.
  - Counties shall list in the email sent to the applicant/beneficiary the names of the included PDF documents.
  - The informational materials shall be compressed to decrease the size of the PDF files.
    - Counties shall check with their Information Technology (IT) department for specifications on compressed files and any size limitations of outgoing emails.
  - Counties shall test the email size limit with their IT department to ensure it is deliverable.
    - If undeliverable, counties shall continue sending hard copies by U.S. mail.
- Voter Registration Information
  - Counties shall follow the guidance for National Voter Registration Agency (NVRA) responsibilities outlined in [Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter I 14-40](#) to provide NVRA services at application, annual renewal, and change in address.
  - DHCS recommends counties electing to send informational materials to applicants and beneficiaries by email shall continue to provide voter assistance and shall send the Voter Registration Cards and Voter Preference Forms by U.S. mail to ensure these requirements are met.

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- If a county is considering alternate distribution methods, DHCS highly recommends the county consult [with the Secretary of State \(SOS\) NVRA coordinator](#) for acceptable distribution methods of the Voter Preference Cards and Voter Registration Forms other than in person or U.S. mail. The [NVRA Manual](#) and updated training materials provide guidance on additional approved NVRA distribution methods. NVRA training materials are located at [www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/nvra/training](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/nvra/training)
- Counties must advise DHCS if they choose to use another SOS approved distribution method rather than U.S. mail for distribution of NVRA materials.

Informational materials shall continue to be sent via U.S. mail for Medi-Cal applicants and beneficiaries who opt-out of email distribution for informational materials or do not specify email as their preferred method of contact.

**Suggested Email Message:**

When the county utilizes the email method to send informational materials to the applicant/beneficiary's personal email account, the email must not contain any protected health information or PII. In addition, the message must not indicate that the individual is a Medi-Cal beneficiary or member. Counties may include their county and department logos within the email to indicate to the recipient that the message is official and increase credibility.

Below is an example email template the county may use to notify the applicant or beneficiary when sending informational materials electronically:

**Subject:** Important Message from County of [X] About Medi-Cal Informational Materials

Hello,

This is an automated message providing you with information. The information attached to this email is for you. You are receiving this information because you gave us this email address and indicated you prefer to have us contact you by email. We are required to provide this information to you. You do not need to return any of these materials to the county office. Please carefully read all attachments.

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[County inserts listing of attachments]

Please **DO NOT** send a reply to this email address.

If you have issues opening the files or have any questions, please contact [county specify contact method] for assistance.

If you are not the intended recipient or received this message in error, please contact the county of [X] Medi-Cal office at [county office phone #] immediately and delete the email from your inbox.

**NOTE:** If you wish to opt-out of receiving the informational materials by email, you must contact [county specify contact method] or log in to your online account at [BenefitsCal.com](https://www.benefitscal.com) to change your preferred method of contact. Other methods to opt-out will not change your preferred contact method.

[Placeholder: County/Department Logo and Complimentary Closing, Confidentiality Notice]

**Reminders:**

- Counties and SAWS shall provide households with translated informational materials (when available) in their requested written language and alternate formats upon request.
- All emails must include a copy of [GEN 1365](#) Language Access Services for Limited-English Proficient and Non-English Proficient Individuals.
- Counties/SAWS shall review the DHCS website on a regular basis for announcements in ACWDLs, MEDILs, and the Forms Index to ensure access to the most up-to-date published materials and guidance.

DHCS forms and informational materials are available by program, form number, form name, and translated languages at the DHCS website:

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/forms/Pages/MCEDFormsMain.aspx>

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If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Nancy Liu by phone at (916) 345-7838 or by email at [nancy.liu@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:nancy.liu@dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Yingjia Huang  
Assistant Deputy Director  
Health Care Benefits and Eligibility  
Department of Health Care Services