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Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter No.: I 17-08

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY MEDI-CAL PROGRAM SPECIALISTS/LIAISONS

SUBJECT: Online Single-Streamlined Application Updates

The purpose of this Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter (MEDIL) is to inform counties of upcoming changes to the online Single Streamlined Application (SSApp) that individuals use to apply for insurance affordability programs through CoveredCA.com. The California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System (CalHEERS) will implement these changes in Release 17.7 on July 31, 2017.

Overview

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), in collaboration with Covered California, the County Welfare Directors Association, the Statewide Automated Welfare Systems (SAWS), CalHEERS and stakeholders, worked with Fjord (formerly Chaotic Moon), a private digital design consulting company and subsidiary of Accenture, to redesign the SSApp to enhance the user experience. The redesigned SSApp provides California consumers with a safe, fast, and simpler online application experience. The redesign emphasizes simplicity and, generally, users will see fewer questions per page, and have additional help text provided throughout the SSApp.

Based on user-testing feedback, changes include improved grouping of questions within the application in a more logical flow for users. The redesign, beginning in Release 17.6 and continuing in future releases, allows the SSApp to dynamically use the applicant's prior responses to display future questions on an as-needed basis to determine potential program eligibility. Some questions previously asked repetitively at an individual level are now asked at a household level. For example, the SSApp's current question "Is this person pregnant?" is now replaced by a graphic showing each household member with the instructions: "Select all household members that are pregnant". This change reduces the overall length of the application and simplifies the process for users.

In addition to a complete visual redesign, the online SSApp and SAWS access channels are also implementing other changes and functional updates to conform to statutory and regulatory requirements. A summary of these changes include:

- Compliance with the provisions of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 92.206) which, among other things, requires the Medi-Cal program to treat individuals consistent with their gender identity, and prohibits the Medi-Cal program from denying or limiting health services that are ordinarily or exclusively available to individuals of one sex based on their gender identity or recorded gender. As a result:
 - For the question “What is your gender?” Individuals will be able to choose their gender identity as either male, female, transgender: female to male, or transgender: male to female. Individuals are able to self-identify and verification of gender identity is not required, therefore, counties must not request verification of this information.
 - The pregnancy question will display to all individuals, regardless of gender. Individuals who attest to being pregnant will be deemed pregnant for purposes of their eligibility determination for Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and Non-MAGI Medi-Cal programs regardless of gender identity. This means that individuals who identify as male or transgender will be screened for eligibility using the full Medi-Cal hierarchy, and determined eligible for pregnancy related aid codes if all other eligibility factors are met.
 - MEDIL 16-09 provides current guidance on accepting self-attestation of pregnancy. This policy has been expanded to include all individuals, regardless of gender.
- Compliance with Assembly Bill 959, Chapter 565 Statutes of 2015 Government Code, Section 8310.8, which requires DHCS to collect voluntarily self-identified information about sexual orientation and gender identity. Individuals will be able to provide optional demographic information about sexual orientation and gender identity after submitting their application.
 - * The changes listed above will be included in the SAWS application portals once revisions to the SAWS 2 PLUS paper application are complete.
- Compliance with Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 435.907 by removing the functionality that required individuals who are not applying for coverage for themselves to provide their Social Security Number (SSN), in accordance with existing Medi-Cal requirements, when applying using the online

SSApp. The non-applicants will be able to provide their SSN but not required to do so in order to proceed with the SSApp.

- The online SSApp has the following newly added questions. The county shall follow existing policy guidance as described below to follow-up with consumers at application, report a change, or renewal, as appropriate.
 - Questions regarding whether an individual is eligible for or has received services from the Indian Health Service, a tribal health program, or an urban Indian health program (see All County Welfare Director Letter (ACWDL) 15-10 for more information).
 - Questions regarding United States military service of an individual, or their spouse or parent's United States military service (see ACWDL 16-04 for more information).
 - Questions regarding whether an individual is involved in a lawsuit because of an injury or accident (see MEDIL 17-06 for more information).

Other improvements and changes to the online SSApp:

Please Note: The questions in the SAWS application portals will continue to model after the paper SAWS 2 PLUS.

- Removes the deprivation question (“Does this child have a parent living outside the home, a deceased parent, or is this child adopted by a single parent?”).
- Aligns race and ethnicity responses to match the paper SSApp (CCFRM604).
- Enhances accuracy of the print copy of the consumer's application. Currently, after the application submission, the printable application (in PDF format) does not display all questions on the application. After implementation of the SSApp improvements, the printable application will display all answered questions, thus improving the accuracy of the printable application.
- Adds new information regarding non-discrimination, 10-day reporting requirements, and estate recovery to the signature page.
- Improved application design bypasses questions regarding minimum value standard and affordability of employer sponsored insurance for individuals that appear to be eligible for Medi-Cal.

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If you have any questions or if we can provide further information, please contact Alison Brown at (916) 319-9565 or by email at alison.brown@dhcs.ca.gov or Kathryn Floto at (916) 322-1689 or by email at kathryn.floto@dhcs.ca.gov.

Original Signed By

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