

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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May 18, 2000

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Administrative Officers
All County Medi-Cal Program Specialists/Liaisons
All County Mental Health Directors
All County Public Health Directors

Letter No.: 00-31

ELIMINATION OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW AT APPLICATION

The purpose of this letter is to inform counties that effective July 1, 2000, counties shall begin processing Medi-Cal applications through a mail-in process, eliminating the face-to-face interview for **all** persons/families. Prior to July 1, 2000, the face-to-face interview was eliminated only for applicants using the MC 321 HFP Mail-In application for Healthy Families/Medi-Cal for Children and Pregnant Women.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) is required to implement a Medi-Cal mail-in application effective July 1, 2000. The DHS is currently revising the MC210 Medi-Cal Statement of Facts for this purpose, but until the revisions are finalized, counties are to begin implementing this process using the current MC210 or SAWS 2.

Exception: All applications for minor consent services must be made in person at the county Medi-Cal office or outstation sites.

Counties currently conducting face-to-face interviews at the time of application shall allow applicants the option of taking the application home to complete and return by mail. Likewise, counties who schedule applicants for "bring-back" appointments shall allow applicants to return the forms by mail. ISAWS counties can allow applicants the option of completing the "interactive" interview in person or by phone, but shall also offer all applicants the option of returning the application forms by mail without any interview requirement. Counties shall provide postage paid envelopes to applicants for their use when returning forms or verifications. County staff shall obtain a SAWS 1 when the MC 210/SAWS 2 is provided to the applicant. If the request for an application is made by phone, the county shall complete a SAWS 1 on the applicant's behalf to protect the applicant's date of application and retro months of eligibility, and mail the MC 210/SAWS 2 to the applicant for completion.

Applicants shall be advised that they may want to come in to the county office for assistance if they have an immediate need for Medi-Cal benefits.

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Please note: This policy change allows all applicants the right to request a face-to-face interview with eligibility staff if they so desire and eligibility staff are allowed to require that applicants complete a face-to-face interview before benefits are established only when there is good cause such as suspicion of fraud.

The criteria for eligibility staff to require a good cause face-to-face interview shall be consistent with the criteria established in All County Welfare Directors Letter No. 99-36 which eliminated the face-to-face interview requirement at the Medi-Cal redetermination, and should be one or more of the following situations that cannot be resolved by phone or mail:

- Questionable information on the application form or verifications provided,
- Individual/family has no visible means of support such as in-kind income or means of support not reported for the individual and/or family;
- Obvious discrepancies between information reported on an application and Income Eligibility System (IEVS) on assets or income; or
- Self-employed individual whose income and expenses do not match reported income and that questionable information could not be resolved with follow-up telephone contact and/or mail.

When a beneficiary is requested by the county to attend a face-to-face interview for any reason, eligibility staff must document the reason(s) in the case record for post-eligibility review and audit.

Counties are encouraged to develop procedures that will streamline the application process for applicants and county staff. Counties may want to develop various general application packets, (packets for families, persons entering long-term care, etc.) and cover letters that can accompany the packets with information that will help applicants complete the application process. The cover letters should include worker name and phone number, the date that forms must be returned to the county, and can include various other information such as types of verifications that are needed to determine eligibility. The cover letters should also inform applicants that they have the option of receiving help with completion of the application by phone or in person. Counties are also encouraged to share their ideas and new procedures with the State. The State would compile "Best Practices" that would be shared with all counties.

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Eligibility requirements for the Medi-Cal program have not changed with this administrative change. Each case record must contain adequate information with supportive documentation to verify an individual's eligibility. Verification of identity, residence, citizenship/alien status, social security number, income and/or resources remain a part of the eligibility determination process. **Photocopies of all required documentation are acceptable. Program eligibility staff are no longer required to view original documents, including original alien documents.**

In addition to the verifications provided by the applicant, County Social Service Departments, shall also use the IEVS, and Systematic Alien Verification of Eligibility, to confirm unearned income such as unemployment benefits/disability payments from the Employment Development Department, Social Security benefits from the Social Security Administration, and alien status.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, OTHER PROGRAM INFORMING REQUIREMENTS

In order to ensure that federal informing requirements are met, all applicants shall receive the information bulleted below at the same time they are given the MC 210 or SAWS 2. The county worker shall document in the case record that the information was provided. The applicant is not required to return a signed copy of the MC 219 to the county.

- MC 219 Important Information for Persons Requesting Medi-Cal
- Child Health and Disability Prevention program brochure
- MC 007 Medi-Cal Information Notice
- Medi-Cal "What It Means To You" pamphlet

If an applicant requests information and explanation of any program or referral to any services, eligibility staff must ensure the applicant's request is met and the action taken is annotated in the case record. At the time eligibility is established or denied, applicants must be sent any other required program information that is appropriate depending on the applicant's circumstances.

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The State and counties have faced several challenges in the past two years in order to make health care benefits more widely accessible to the uninsured. The Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch would again like to take this opportunity to thank program staff for their efforts and hard work. County staff is encouraged to begin developing procedures that will ensure the successful transition from the face-to-face interview to the mail-in application process. If you have any questions or comments regarding this policy change eliminating the face-to-face requirement at time of application, please contact Ms. Linda Rahmeyer of my staff at (916) 657-0398.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
GLENDA ARELLANO**

Angeline Mrva, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch