



## **Lessons from California: Medi-Cal Renewals**

### THE ISSUE:

In an effort to streamline enrollment and retention under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [guidance](#) permitting states to delay the annual renewal of eligibility for existing Medicaid enrollees. [The majority of states took this option](#), with a few delaying renewals until December 2015, in order to allow their state Medicaid agencies time to implement the new Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) rules and handle the increased workload due to the Medicaid expansion enrollment and IT system changes.

California requested a 3 month delay of renewals until June 2014. However, an unprecedented 1.9 million Californians enrolled in Medi-Cal during open enrollment and close to another 1 million applications are still pending as of May 2014. Despite the overwhelming demand on county Medi-Cal eligibility workers to process new applications and the errors with the new IT system that have delayed the timely processing of pending applications, the state refused to push back renewal timelines further for existing beneficiaries. Instead, California is requiring beneficiaries to complete newer, longer and confusing forms to obtain the MAGI tax household information. To make matters worse, none of the forms are available in the [legally required threshold languages that many enrollees speak](#). As a result, potentially hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries are in jeopardy of losing their Medi-Cal coverage.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Federal model renewal form](#)

[CMS presentation on renewal form \(Nov 2013\)](#)

### STRATEGY AND ACTIONS:

After learning of the backlog in applications, that the new IT system was not properly determining beneficiaries under the new MAGI rules, and that the state would not be able to develop and use the required prepopulated renewal form until 2015, advocates again requested the state delay renewals until all these barriers are addressed. A broad group of stakeholders, including county welfare directors, labor, community clinics, hospitals, as well as consumer advocates, urged the state to reconsider and notified the legislature of the concerns. (Copies of the letters are available upon request). NHeLP also met with CMS to educate them about these concerns. Nevertheless, the state Administration remains intent on moving forward with its timeline. Advocates continue to raise concerns about this [publicly](#), and are even considering a legal challenge regarding the state's failure to send alternative language renewal forms to beneficiaries who are known to be limited English proficient.

In the meantime, NHeLP and other advocates have worked extensively with the state Medi-Cal agency to improve California's current [renewal form](#) and develop a more appropriate prepopulated form for 2015. We are also educating community groups on how to help consumers complete the renewal forms, and working to ensure the state provides additional consumer protections and due process rights before terminating any beneficiary.