



Lessons from California

Celebrating 50 Years of Medi-Cal and Looking Ahead

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THE ISSUE:

This year marks the [50th Anniversary of the Medi-Cal program](#). Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, had just over 1 million people enrolled in its first year. The [Affordable Care Act brought historic growth](#) as the Medi-Cal program expanded to include childless adults ages 19-64 and now covers over 13 million Californians. Implementation of the ACA has not stopped innovation and this year Medi-Cal extended full-scope benefits to all eligible [children under 19 regardless of immigration status](#). Medi-Cal continues to be a critical entitlement for low-income Californians, with over 10 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries accessing services through a [managed care health](#) delivery system.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Medi-Cal](#)

[50 Years of Medi-Cal Timeline](#)

[List of Medi-Cal Stakeholder Meetings](#)

[Health4AllKids](#)

[ACA & Medi-Cal](#)

STRATEGY AND ACTIONS:

Medi-Cal is a leader among states in both its expansive eligibility and the services it covers. While Medi-Cal has always covered medically necessary care, in recent years the program has improved benefits and services in some key areas. In 2014, Medi-Cal restored many adult dental services to its program, [Denti-Cal](#), in addition to the comprehensive services it provides children. Medi-Cal also now covers [behavioral health therapy](#) to children with autism spectrum disorders and is poised to provide [therapeutic foster care](#) for children as a specialty mental health service beginning in 2017. Medi-Cal is also committed to the health, safety and reproductive rights of women. It covers [abortion care with no prior authorization](#) required to go out-of-network unless a hospital stay is required. Medi-Cal even created [a new smartphone app](#) for beneficiaries to have easier access to certain information on the go.

With unprecedented growth and change always come great challenges and as we look forward to the Medi-Cal of the future. First, there are many improvements and fixes necessary for the state eligibility computer system, CalHEERS, to ensure that Medi-Cal eligibility results are timely and accurate. [Medi-Cal works in conjunction with Covered California and community stakeholders](#) to set policy and priorities in both business rules programming and to improve the [single streamlined application](#). Second, Medi-Cal must improve access to care, both by ensuring [adequate provider networks](#) and focusing [on rural access to care](#). Third, Medi-Cal must strengthen its commitment to the civil rights of its applicants and beneficiaries, by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and information. Finally, Medi-Cal must continue its work in improving access to behavioral health services.

California's commitment to ensuring access to health care has been vital for low-income Californians and serves as a leader for other state Medicaid programs. We look forward to working to make Medi-Cal the best program it can be for 50 more years!