

A GUIDE TO ACCESSING MEDI-CAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CURRENT AND FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

About This Guide

This guide provides information and resources to current and former foster youth on how to access mental health services through California's Medicaid program (Medi-Cal).

Who is a "current foster youth" under Medi-Cal?

A current foster youth is someone who is in foster care *right now*. This includes non-minor dependents in extended foster care.

What about a "former foster youth"?

A former foster youth is someone who was in foster care in *any* state on their 18th birthday or later.



If you're unsure whether you're a current or former foster youth, contact the **Foster Care Ombudsman Office** at 1-877-846-1602 or fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov

If you're not a foster youth, you may still qualify for Medi-Cal mental health services for other reasons. Check out Page 5 of this guide for additional resources.

Need mental health help now?

Free. No insurance needed.

- Family Urgent Response System (FURS) (available 24/7 for current and former foster youth):
Call or text 1-833-939-3877, or chat online at [Cal-FURS.org](https://cal-furs.org)
- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741-741
- The Trevor Project (for LGBTQIA+ youth): Call 1-866-488-7386, text START to 678-678, or chat online at thetrevorproject.org/webchat
- CalHOPE (for peer support): Call 833-317-HOPE (4673) or chat online at calhopeconnect.org



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Getting Mental Health Services

What mental health services does Medi-Cal cover?

Medi-Cal covers medically necessary screenings and treatment for conditions related to your mental health. If you are under age 21, you can get more services from Medi-Cal through "Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Services" (EPSDT).

There are different categories of Medi-Cal mental health services, including "SMHS" and "NSMHS."

SMHS = Specialty mental health services, which are provided through your county mental health plan (MHP)

NSMHS = Non-specialty mental health services, which are provided through your managed care plan (MCP) or Medi-Cal fee-for-service (FFS)

MHPs = county-operated health plans that manage SMHS and substance-use disorder treatment

MCPs = privately-operated health plans (like Kaiser, Anthem, or LA Care) that contract with the State to manage NSMHS and other Medi-Cal services

FFS = when Medi-Cal directly pays providers, instead of going through a health plan



What types of mental health services are available?

Here are some examples of SMHS:

- Therapy or counseling
- Medication support
- Eating disorder services
- Supports during a crisis
- Facility-based or hospital services
- Case management
- Peer support services
- Foster care support (for under 21)
- Intensive home-based services (for under 21)



Here are some examples of NSMHS:

- Individual, family, and group therapy
- Medication support
- Outpatient drug and alcohol support
- Dyadic services (joint screening and treatment) for you and your parent/caregiver (for under 21)



You can get SMHS and NSMHS at the same time!

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Getting Mental Health Services

Do I qualify for mental health services?

For SMHS

If you're under 21, you have a right to SMHS if:

- You have a mental health disorder; OR
- You have been involved in the child welfare system or experienced other trauma.

You do NOT need to have a diagnosis to get mental health care!

If you're 21 or older, you have a right to SMHS if:

- You have a mental health disorder (either diagnosed or suspected); AND
- That condition negatively impacts important parts of your day-to-day life, or is likely to.

If you're involved in the child welfare system, but not in foster care, you still have a right to access SMHS without a diagnosis.



For NSMHS

If you're under 21, you have a right to NSMHS if:

- You have a **potential** mental health disorder; OR
- You need screening or treatment to improve your mental health.

If you're 21 or older, you have a right to NSMHS if:

- You have a **potential** mental health disorder; OR
- You have a mental health condition that is causing distress or negatively impacting important parts of your day-to-day life.

How do I get mental health services?

To get SMHS

Contact your **county mental health plan (MHP)**. Find their contact info at tinyurl.com/DHCSMHPs

To get NSMHS

If you're enrolled in a **managed care plan (MCP)**, then contact them. Find contact info at tinyurl.com/DHCSMCPs

If you're not enrolled in a MCP, but instead in **fee-for-service (FFS)**, then visit tinyurl.com/FFSProviders to find a provider.



If you're unsure whether you have a MCP or FFS, check with your social worker or contact your county's social services agency (tinyurl.com/CountyHealthOffices)



Not sure where to start?

Contact your county mental health plan first (tinyurl.com/DHCSMHPs)

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Q & A

How do I find a mental health provider?

Contact your county MHP or your MCP. You can also contact the Health Consumer Alliance at 1-888-804-3536 for further help.

How do I know if I need SMHS or NSMHS, or both?

Contact your county MHP or your MCP for an assessment.

Can I change my provider?

Yes! You can change providers any time. Call your county MHP or MCP to ask for more options.

Can I get help with transportation to my appointments?

Yes. Call your MCP (if you are enrolled in one) or your FFS provider. Find more information, including a list of transportation providers, at tinyurl.com/DHCSTransportation

How quickly can I get a mental health appointment?

Your county MHP is required to give you an urgent appointment within 48 hours (or 96 hours if a prior authorization is required) AND a non-urgent appointment (including new and follow-up) within 10 business days of your request or your last appointment.

Can I get mental health services without a parent or caretaker agreeing?

If you're 12 or older, you may be able to get services like counseling on your own if a provider thinks you are mature enough to consent. Ask your MCP or your social worker about how to get these services. Learn more at tinyurl.com/MinorConsentResource



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Resources

DIRECTORY

County Mental Health Plans (MHPs)

tinyurl.com/DHCSMHPs

Managed Care Plans (MCPs)

tinyurl.com/DHCSMCPs

County Medi-Cal Offices

tinyurl.com/CountyHealthOffices

Foster Care Questions

Foster Care Ombudsman
1-877-846-1602

or

[tinyurl.com/FosterCare
Ombudsman](https://tinyurl.com/FosterCareOmbudsman)

Free Legal Help

Health Consumer Alliance (HCA)

1-888-804-3536

TTY 877-735-2929

healthconsumer.org

Free 24/7 Support

The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) provides free 24/7 call, text, live chat, and in-person support to children and youth who have spent time in foster care – for issues big or small.

Call/Text 1-833-939-3877
OR chat at Cal-FURS.org

Foster Youth Bill of Rights:

tinyurl.com/FYBillOfRights

Reproductive Health Resources:

[tinyurl.com/nhelp-youth-
resources](https://tinyurl.com/nhelp-youth-resources)

General Mental Health Resource:

tinyurl.com/NCYL-mental-health



MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT FOR CURRENT AND FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR MEDI-CAL

As a current or former foster youth, you should have been automatically enrolled in Medi-Cal.

If you are a current foster youth:

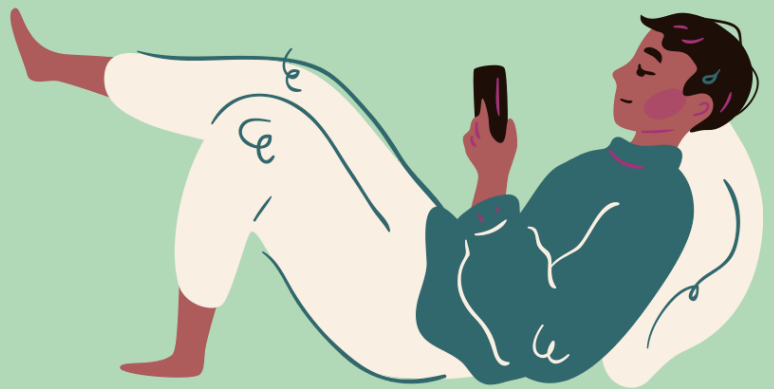
- You are eligible for Medi-Cal. It does not matter how much money you, your parents, or your caregivers make.
- If you are under 18 and decide to stay in extended foster care, you do not lose Medi-Cal or need to re-apply when you turn 18.
- Even if you choose to leave foster care after you turn 18, your Medi-Cal will continue without any gap in coverage until you are 26.

If you are a former foster youth:

- You are eligible for Medi-Cal. It does not matter how much money you make.
- If you are not already enrolled, then you should contact the Health Consumer Alliance (HCA) at 1-888-805-3536.

WHAT IF I LOST MY MEDI-CAL?

If you lost Medi-Cal or have questions about it, contact your social worker or the HCA at 1-888-805-3536 or healthconsumer.org.



Learn More

- [My Medi-Cal: How to Get the Health Care You Need](https://dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/myMediCal.pdf) (dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/myMediCal.pdf): A resource from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) that has more detail about how to apply for Medi-Cal and what services it covers.
- [DHCS FAQs for the Former Foster Youth Program](https://tinyurl.com/DHCSFFY) (tinyurl.com/DHCSFFY)
- [Covered Til 26](https://coveredtil26.org) (coveredtil26.org): A resource that provides former foster youth information about how to access free Medi-Cal coverage and what to do if a county worker doesn't know about Medi-Cal for former foster youth.

Contact HCA at 1-888-805-3536 or healthconsumer.org for any questions.