



Maternal and Child Health Access

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Next MCH Access monthly meeting: Thursday, July 17, 2008, 10 AM – 12 noon
MCH Access 1111 W. 6th St., Fourth Floor- free parking in back, entering on Fifth
Topics: **DRA and health advocacy issues**

In this mailing

- LADPH Children's Health Outreach Initiative's, "How to Get a Birth Certificate in Los Angeles County" helpful during DRA – remember, don't wait for a birth certificate before applying!
- Pregnant Citizens on Medi-Cal – English and Spanish
- Great LA Breastfeeding Task Force's Breastfeeding Resource Directory, 2008.

Distributed June 19 (except events no longer timely) – call for copies

- Pregnant citizens on Medi-Cal (included here)
- LADPH Children's Health Outreach Initiative's, "How to Get a Birth Certificate in Los Angeles County" (included here)
- PE brochure – preview copies
- AB 30 (Evans) – health care coverage for special food products and formulas necessary to address inborn errors of metabolism
- Medi-Cal Managed Care Division Policy Letter 07006 clarifying requirements for Medi-Cal managed care health plans to provide medically necessary therapeutic enteral formulas
- WIC formulas list – contract formulas and those for which prescription required
- Screening forms for infants and child needing therapeutic formulas
- State Therapeutic formulas request form
- PHFE WIC Program therapeutic formula request form
- PHFE WIC Program letter to providers explaining WIC's role in provision of therapeutic formula

Notes – Thursday, June 19

DRA Implementation – Donald Nollar reminded us that the federal Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) requirement would be in place to ask citizen applicants for the newly required citizenship documents. MCHA, the Health Consumer Center and DPSS conducted a special training of over 100 people who work with Medi-Cal recipients. We are available for questions and additional trainings.

Panel discussion - therapeutic formula

Andrea Ruiz-Melendez, Senior Staff Assistant and Kiran Saluja, MPH, RD, Deputy Director, STEP, PHFE WIC Program
Karla Magie, MPH, RD, and Waverly Pierce, California Department of Public Health, WIC Program, Food Package Section;
Cheryl Garcia, RN, LA Care, Care Manager and WIC Liaison
Vergia Slade, BS, MHA, Senior Public Health Programs Administrator, Health Net of California

MCHA invited several speakers to address continuing issues with the provision of special formulas (those considered medically necessary and covered by Medi-Cal when used as a medically necessary "therapeutic regimen to prevent serious disability or death in patients with medically necessary diagnosed conditions that preclude the use of regular food". A list of questions to be addressed was developed, such as the role of various agencies. Kiran Saluja of PHFE WIC

started us off by recognizing that “breast is best” and that if more infants were breastfed, we would not need as much therapeutic formula.

(Breastfeeding Resource Directories were available)

There are several WIC agencies in Los Angeles County and what will be discussed here is how PHFE WIC addresses therapeutic formula.

Moreover, the WIC Program’s addition of various Enfamil formulas to the state contract (no prescription needed) has greatly reduced the need for special permissions or considerations.

According to Karla Magie, WIC agencies are really “safety net” for therapeutic formulas, as Medi-Cal is required to cover all medically necessary covered services, either through Fee for Service (FFS) Medi-Cal or via Medi-Cal Managed Care providing or arranging for the services. Medi-Cal Managed Care Policy Letter 07-016 is very specific about the need for plans to have written policies and procedures. The letter was sent in our last mailing: www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Pages/PolicyLetters.aspx#2007,

It became clear that despite agreement that no one is questioning the provider who prescribes the special formulas, there are Treatment Authorization Requests (TARs) required for these formulas under Fee for Service Medi-Cal and internal health plan approvals under Medi-Cal Managed Care. Neither plan representative had been asked to provide numbers of denials. Andrea Ruiz Melendez is the on-the-ground expert at PHFE WIC and in her experience, no TARs are ever denied in the FFS world. Likewise, she has found that “commercial” pharmacies, such as Rite Aid, CVS, Walgreens, etc. do not want to provide the formula for FFS Medi-Cal clients, but are often part of the contracted network for Managed Care clients. Contacts for problems with therapeutic formulas were provided by the Plan representatives and the state:

- Health Net Vergia Slade 909-890-4123
- LA Care Member Services (call first)
- 1-888-839-9909, then to Cheryl Garcia 213-694-1250 ext. 4136
- Karla Magie, State WIC 916-928-8652

Ms. Magie provided a copy of San Diego State University’s form for families which may be adapted; if of interest please call MCHA.

MCHA’s summary of the issues as expressed by the panel and attendees (not reviewed by all groups):

- Confusion and a lack of knowledge: the issue of therapeutic formula is complex and poorly

understood among "stakeholders", these being providers, pharmacists, hospitals, low-income families in need, advocates and agencies trying to help, and the state.

- Education and Training: More and improved education and training is needed for providers, as well as other stakeholders, that the provision of medical formula depends on the kind of insurance the baby or child has or does not have.

- Standardize and follow procedures: Clear, standardized instructions and procedures among organizations and providers, pharmacies, medical groups, plans and subplans, and enforcement to provide consistency is needed.

- Role of WIC: the 'message' should be that WIC is the safety net only for such formula; the first source should be from the any insurance the child has.

- FFS Medi-Cal: Why commercial pharmacies don't contract with Medi-Cal must be explored - it is unacceptable that few pharmacies in LA and fewer in other counties accept FFS Medi-Cal for therapeutic formula

- Health Plan Policies and Procedures: We need to get copies of each plan's policies stated on page 2-3 of the state Plan Policy letter and understand enforcement mechanism(s), copies of their letters to providers and members (p. 5) and other items mentioned in the state’s instructions.

- Data: The state needs to collect data on emergency, expedited and other requests and other items in 07-016 letter and stakeholder groups should have access to this data.

- TARS and approval: We need to understand the effect of TARs on access to formulas and why TARs must be requested if all are always approved. Finally, improved communication and coordination among providers, health plans, pharmacists, discharge planners and local and state WIC agencies is needed to streamline and improve access to medically necessary formulas and follow-up care. MCHA is happy to be able to report that in mid July, state WIC Program representatives Waverly Pierce and Karla Magie will be following up on our meeting with additional meetings in Los Angeles to ensure the needs of infants and children needing these formulas are met.

NEW – “How to Get Food and Money” updated! To order the People's Guide: Laura Calderón at (213) 251-0041 ext 100 or send an email to laura@lacehh.org. Or download in PDF at: www.lacehh.org - make sure it's 2008 version.