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Medi-Cal's Non-Medical Transportation Benefit Under a New State Law

What is it? "Non-medical transportation" is transportation to and from a doctor's visit, a pharmacy, or medical supplier to pick up prescriptions or medical equipment or devices, to attend to a sick baby in the NICU, or to receive any other Medi-Cal-covered service, including mental health and dental.

Medi-Cal now covers this transportation for beneficiaries who do not have and cannot get transportation on their own. See Welf. & Inst. C. § 14132(ad). Transportation includes, at a minimum, round trip rides for a beneficiary to obtain covered Medi-Cal services by passenger car, taxicab, or any other form of public or private conveyance, and mileage reimbursement. Bus tokens or passes, taxi vouchers, train tickets and similar can also be used.

This "non-medical" transportation differs from and is in addition to "medical transportation", like paratransit or a litter van for people unable to use private or other public transportation. It is also in addition to ambulance service and other emergency transportation.

Who qualifies for Non-Medical Transportation? All Medi-Cal beneficiaries, regardless of whether the person is in a health plan or "regular" (fee-for-service) Medi-Cal, who lack other transportation to reach a Medi-Cal-covered service, and who do not require medical assistance with transport. This includes women in all categories of pregnancy-related aid codes.

Transportation is also covered for one person to go with the Medi-Cal beneficiary when necessary, such as an attendant to accompany an elderly person or a parent to take her child to the doctor. Parents can authorize teens to receive Medi-Cal transportation assistance on their own. But when parental consent is not required, for the Medi-Cal service, such as for Minor Consent program services, transportation must be provided without a parent's consent.

For Medi-Cal health plan members

For Medi-Cal beneficiaries enrolled in managed care, the state has instructed the health plans to provide non-medical transportation to plan services. Plans must also arrange transportation to "carved out" services, such as dental and specialty mental health. See [All Plan Letter No. 17-010 \(July 17, 2017\)](#).

How do plan members get non-medical transportation?

Plan members should be able to get non-medical transportation by calling or e-mailing Member Services; below are plan numbers for Los Angeles County health plans:

- Anthem Blue Cross: (888) 285-7801
- Care First: (800) 605-2556
- Health Net: (800) 675-6110
- Kaiser: (800) 464-4000
- LA Care: (888) 452-2273
- Molina: (800) 526-8196

But, at present, many of the plans seem to require a plan provider to make the request, using a form to certify that the transportation is needed. MCHA is working to make sure that no form is required and no provider has to certify the need for non-medical transportation (see state contacts, below).

Distance? Time? How many rides? There shouldn't be any limitation on the distance or time for the travel or how many times non-medical transportation may be used so long as the person continues to be eligible for Medi-Cal and they lack other transportation to a medically necessary service covered by Medi-Cal.

MCH Access and other advocates have asked the state to make it clear to all of the plans that limitations are not permitted, as many have been imposed in the past, such as "no rides over 25 miles, no more than three rides a month", and similar. See contact information at the end if you come across barriers.

For Medi-Cal fee-for-service (FFS) beneficiaries

The implementation of non-medical transportation services for "regular" or fee-for-service beneficiaries presents a different picture and will generally require an advocate or provider's assistance.

As of January, 2018: State DHCS now says providers and others should send an email to the state if they are unable to secure non-medical transportation for their clients, after contacting county contacts for FFS transportation assistance; see [list here](#) and LA County or City of Long Beach contacts:

Los Angeles County

MAA/TCM Primary Coordinator & Signer
Ms. Olga Murga-Rodriguez
LGA Coordinator
Department of Public Health
Phone: (323) 890-7548 Fax: (323) 887-5177
Email: omurga@ph.lacounty.gov

City Of Long Beach

MAA/TCM Primary Coordinator & Signer
Denise Tong, Public Health Associate
Department of Health & Human Services
Phone: (562)570-4278 Fax: (562)570-4099
Email: denise.tong@longbeach.gov

If your client is not assisted, send an email (securely, if client's name is used) to: Rene Mollow, Deputy Director, and cc Laurie Weaver Assistant Deputy Director, Health Care Benefits & Eligibility: Rene.Mollow@dhcs.ca.gov; laurie.weaver@dhcs.ca.gov. We asked for a phone number to make it easier for clients. Note: Use these emails for other legitimate transportation issues with managed care clients also. We are hearing, for example, of Member Services requiring physician certification for non-medical transportation. These statements cannot be required; see [All Plan Letter No. 17-010 \(July 17, 2017\)](#).

The gaps mainly affect pregnant women, foster children, seniors, and people with disabilities, as these groups are not always required to enroll into a Medi-Cal managed care plan. The lack of transportation services for this population can be very dangerous. Emergency helicopter evacuation from Santa Rosa became necessary for a high-risk pregnant woman referred to a specialist in San Francisco but who lacked a way to travel there; the airlift cost far more than the bus ticket would have, and the life-threatening, preventable medical emergency was utterly devastating to the woman and newborn.

We continue to discuss the gap in non-medical transportation in Medi-Cal's fee-for-service program with the state. Please let us know of any issues you are having with accessing transportation for Medi-Cal beneficiaries by contacting MCHA: 213-749-4261 or Lynn Kersey or Lucy Quacinella at: lynnk@mchaccess.org or Lucyqmas@gmail.com