

Maternal and Child Health Access



Monthly (Virtual) Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2025 - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Where?

ONLINE!



10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

After you register, look for
the Zoom link in your
registration confirmation
email

Speaker/Topic:

**State Budget – what does 2025-26
hold?**

**Newborn Enrollment into Medi-Cal
and now Managed Care**

**Lucy Quacinella, Multiforum
Advocacy Solutions**

Updates

January is: [National Blood Donor Month](#) – so needed! 38% of people are eligible to donate, but less than 10% actually do.



National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month

- National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month



Our hearts go out to all who have suffered during the wildfires and the incomprehensible destruction they have waged. For those who can, please donate to reputable sources and people you know. There is so much to be done. [Baby2Baby](https://www.baby2baby.org) is donating and utilizing volunteers in the most affected areas for diapers and wipes, formula and other baby necessities.

May this serve to remind us all to be ready at any time to leave our homes and to have a plan and a “go bag”. Lots of resource posts are circulating now from multiple sources. See AirNow.gov for air quality in your area and use Watch Duty ([watchduty.org](https://www.watchduty.org)) app or site for wildfire maps, also Emergency Network LA ([enla.org](https://www.enla.org)) to volunteer or donate.

If you're looking for ways to contribute to relief efforts, we encourage you to explore [Mutual Aid Los Angeles's Resource List](#), and the [Displaced Black Families Altadena & Pasadena Mutual Aid Directory](#). This is 537 families displaced, with links to Latine, Filipino and an overall list. Altadena contains historic Black neighborhoods.

See below:

[Pregnant And Live Near LA Wildfires? Take Extra Precautions Or Consider Leaving, Experts Say](#): After five days of an unrelenting firestorm in Los Angeles County, medical experts are warning that the area's smoke levels pose unique risks to those who are pregnant and their fetuses. Read more from the [Los Angeles Times](#); see below.. Plus, NPR explains [why the smoke is so dangerous](#).

Notes from Monthly Meeting November 21, 2024

www.mchaccess.org/meetings.htm

Speaker: Lucy Quacinella – Multiforum Advocacy Solutions
Update on State Maternity Reports

CA's Surgeon General in October issued a report, "[California's Maternal Health Blueprint 2024](#)" with the main goal to reduce maternal deaths by half by 2026. This is an incredible goal and we applaud the intent, but many organizations found the focus is on individual assessment and the omission of racism as a public health threat problematic. One example is the need for additional legislation to enforce legislation already passed that providers even be trained on implicit bias. This omission comes amid growing work and evidence on the impact of stress, the existence of racial disparities in health and birth outcomes despite high income and education, etc. Groups noted that the tool suggested for self-assessment in the blueprint has not been validated as a population health measure. MCHA helped comment on [the report](#) and attended the zoom meeting with Surgeon General Dr. Ramos.

Here is the [letter of concern](#) from doulas, midwives, community and advocacy organizations, and [article in LA Times](#) about the push-back – please let Lynn know if you need a copy/can't open. It was also picked up by [Yahoo News](#) which features more links to studies and other information.

Secondly, in the state's focus on supports for most vulnerable populations, pregnant people have had to fit into other categories – i.e. homelessness, substance abuse. Pregnant people weren't their own category for the support from Enhanced Care Management until January of this year, for Black, Native American and Alaskan, and Pacific Islander pregnancies. The population-wide plan for ALL pregnancies and birth under Medi-Cal is called, "Birthing Pathways". This plan was supposed to be released in December. Here is the description from the state's [Birthing Care Pathways website](#):

"In Spring 2023, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) launched the development of a comprehensive Birthing Care Pathway to cover the journey of a Medi-Cal member from conception through 12 months postpartum. The Birthing Care Pathway is for all Medi-Cal members who are pregnant or postpartum. The Birthing Care Pathway is a care model that addresses the physical, behavioral, and health-related social needs for pregnant and postpartum members in Medi-Cal with the goal to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and

address the significant racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes among Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander individuals.”

Lynn Kersey, MCHA March of Dimes Prematurity Report Card –

Lynn Kersey walked attendees through the [2024 Report Card for California](#), which reflects 2023 data. Our state did worse in 2023, 9.2%, than in 2022, at 9.1%. Since 2013, when MOD started publishing these report cards and our rate was 8.4%, we have been trending in the wrong direction. Only from 2013 to 2014 have we improved! This despite the fact more birthing people are covered by insurance. We must do better!

Changes in this year’s report card include that it now examines supportive midwifery policies and policies aimed to increase screening for postpartum depression, which can help to bolster the obstetric workforce and achieve equity in maternal and infant health outcomes. The report notes that chronic health conditions make people more likely to have a preterm birth (remember that Women’s Health presentation in March of last year? Heart disease and cancer? New issues of ultra processed foods and microplastics?)

The card also shows a Maternal Vulnerability Index by county for physical environment and socioeconomic determinants. It also includes a measure of exposure to extreme heat or air pollution, which can increase the risk of poor maternal and infant health conditions including preterm birth. CA showed 20 days of extreme heat and 18 days of poor air quality, but of course both of these measures are local. Heat risk can be checked at www.cdc.gov/heatrisk. It includes air quality but I found not reflective of the fires in LA.

New since last month:

Should pregnant people evacuate L.A. to escape the smoke?

By Jackie Snow, LA Times

Jan. 11, 2025 4:04 PM PT

- Doctors say prolonged exposure to environmental toxins could affect a fetus’ development.
- If pregnant people are in a smoky area for more than a few days, USC Keck School of Medicine’s chair of obstetrics and gynecology Dr. Joseph Ouzounian advises them to “start thinking about either finding somewhere where the air is better or staying indoors with air filters or air purifiers.”

After five days of [an unrelenting firestorm](#) in Los Angeles County, medical experts are warning that the area’s smoke levels pose unique risks to expectant pregnant people and their unborn children.

So what should pregnant L.A. residents do? Read more [here](#).

Newborns are now enrolled into their mother's plans - read below!

MCHA sent this to our networks on Dec. 17:

The following article was published by state DHCS on December 3, 2024: [Medi-Cal News: Update: Change in Procedure for Infants Enrolled Through the Newborn Gateway](#):

The article states that as of November 24, 2024, newborns whose mothers had Medi-Cal or MCAP for the delivery (making the newborn “deemed eligible”, or DE) and who are enrolled into Medi-Cal with a separate number of their own through the Newborn Gateway (NG) will be **automatically enrolled into the mother’s plan. These newborns will not have a primary care provider (PCP) when the default into the mother’s plan occurs.**

Neither the state nor the plan informs the family about any of this; families find out only after the newborn has been defaulted into the mother’s plan.

Read more and what to do [HERE](#)

All Birthing Hospitals Must Certify as Baby-Friendly!

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is sending all California birthing hospitals with a perinatal unit a reminder letter regarding upcoming [legislation to take effect on January 1, 2025](#). Please share the reminder letter with your networks, hospital administrators and organizations that support these efforts. The letter has also been posted on the Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative’s (NUPA)’s [breastfeeding webpage](#). Please share widely.

If you are not familiar with NUPA, visit cdph.ca.gov/NUPA and also email their amazing Coordinator Jocceline Hernandez, MS, RD, IBCLC at jocceline.hernandez@cdph.ca.gov and ask to be put on their mailing list!

Open Enrollment for Covered CA – for DACA recipients too!

Thanks to all of you who have kicked off open enrollment!

Please note that Los Angeles County is affected by a Special Enrollment Period – and will extend Covered California enrollment to March 8, whether or not one was personally affected by the fires. Best to enroll as quickly as possible, but know that people have until March 8. Let us know after 1/31/25 if you can’t find the special enrollment:

State of Emergency Special Enrollment Period

Californians affected by a natural or human-caused disaster that results in a Governor’s State of Emergency proclamation may qualify for a Special Enrollment Period (SEP). The table below shows the current state of emergency list, the Qualifying Life Event (QLE) date, and the last day to select a plan (SEP End Date). The QLE dropdown menu on the Special Enrollment page of the application includes a state of emergency option. To assist consumers who may qualify for this SEP, select “County under state of emergency” from the dropdown menu and enter the date of the Qualifying Life Event.

State of Emergency	QLE Date	SEP End Date
Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino Counties – Earthquake	December 5, 2024	February 3, 2025
Los Angeles and Ventura Counties – Palisades Fire	January 7, 2025	March 8, 2025

Some have asked whether they should continue to push for enrollment considering the election results. The updated [messaging document](#), part of the overall [toolkit](#), include this: "After the election results, some DACA recipients may wonder if they should still enroll in ACA coverage. **Our emphatic answer is yes!** Access to affordable, comprehensive health care under the ACA, including mental health, is more essential than ever. **There is no policy change at this point**, and any future changes are uncertain and would take significant time. **It is important that we do not let fear or anxiety deter us from accessing the hard-fought health care we fought for.**"

Those with concerns can consider this NILC resource: [Know Your Rights: Is It Safe to Apply for Health Insurance or Seek Health Care?](#)

Hot Food Waiver - Disaster

As you may have heard, CA now has a [hot food waiver in five counties](#) (Kern, LA, Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura). This means that in these five counties, people who get CalFresh can use their benefits to buy hot/prepared foods and ready-to-eat foods at grocery stores, corner stores, convenience stores, and other stores that accept CalFresh. People can use their CalFresh to buy foods like hot slices of pizza, hot soup, rotisserie chickens, freshly made sandwiches at the deli counter, etc. The hot food waiver does not apply to restaurants.

In addition, there are timely reporting waivers in effect through February 5, 2025 for LA, Ventura, and Riverside counties. People in these three counties who lost food due to the fires, power outages, evacuations, etc. have until February 5th to report their food loss to the county and have some of their CalFresh allotment replaced. Keep in mind that people can ask for replacement benefits due to other household misfortunes and in other areas, but have only 10 days to do so.

Disaster Assistance to Evacuated Members and Dental Offices Due to Palisades Fire

See Provider Bulletin - please visit the following link: [Volume 41 Number 01](#)

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will allow member and provider processing exceptions to expedite the replacement of removable dental appliances for those being impacted by the Palisades fire in California. Removable dental appliances include:

- Orthodontic retainers
- Space maintainers

- Partial and full dentures
- Temporomandibular joint appliances fabricated by professionals, which may be removed and inserted by the member Disaster assistance will be provided to the California counties of Los Angeles and Ventura. The end date of this assistance is July 31, 2025

Elimination of Requirement to Apply for Other Benefits

New All-County Welfare Director's Letter

Effective June 1, 2025, the requirement to apply for other benefits, often referred to as “unconditionally available income,” will be permanently eliminated for Medi-Cal. See [ACWDL 24-19](#), issued Dec. 16, 2024.

County eligibility workers (CEW) shall not request the Medi-Cal applicant or member apply for unconditional available income or other benefits that include but are not limited to:

- Social Security benefits (e.g., retirement or disability benefits from the Social Security Administration),
- Unemployment Insurance benefits,
- Pensions,
- Veteran's benefits (e.g., disability compensation, pensions, or education assistance), and
- State Disability Insurance.

Some New California Laws Providing Added Protections to Tenants – Coalition for Economic Survival

Laws That Will Go into Effect on January 1, 2025, that Provide Tenant More Rights and Protections

This includes: More time to respond to an eviction notice, changes to security deposit laws, tenant good credit reporting of how they've paid their rent on time, prohibiting fees if paying rent or security deposits by check, domestic violence tenant protection, tenant screening fairness – and more!

The new state law extending the time tenants have to respond to an Unlawful Detainer eviction summons from 5 to 10 business days is a significant development in tenant rights and housing fairness. It provides tenants with more time to prepare a response, seek legal advice, and potentially contest an eviction in court.

Click [HERE](#) for key aspects of the law and key changes in other areas of tenant rights.

Improving Knowledge of Sickle Cell Policies and Resources

Many agencies and people want to improve healthcare for Californians with Sickle Cell, but don't know what's already going on. To help focus that energy, the CA Sickle Cell Data Collection ([SCDC](#)) program [drafted this brief Sickle Cell Policy Inventory](#) - (click [HERE](#) for a PDF version and [HERE](#) for an Excel version that will download automatically when you click on the link) *and want your ideas* via a very [short survey](#) by **Friday, 2.7.2025**.

The [survey](#) asks three questions: How might the Policy Inventory be valuable to you/your organization? What's missing? Who should get the Inventory?

We will consider all feedback and send out a finalized version in early 2025.

Background

- **What's the purpose of this SC Policy Inventory? Its purpose is to list the California specific and national policies and programs that are meant to help improve healthcare for Californians with Sickle Cell.**
- **What does it look like? A listing of over 40 national and state policies and/or agencies, with links to their websites and key resources, short descriptions, and how each agency might be useful.**
- **What do these Policies/Agencies focus on? At least one of these: access to services, availability, affordability, acceptability, quality, equity.**
- **What types of Policies and/or services are listed? Laws/Regulations, Action Plans, Clinical guidelines, Clinical education, Clinical care, Community Based Organizations (CBO), Data.**
- **How can it be used? Find out about the many policies and agencies already working to improve Sickle Cell health, stimulate collaborations to expand services, reduce duplication.**
- **How often will the Inventory be updated? Three times annually.**

California's SCDC program is one of 15 states funded by the [Center for Disease Control's National Sickle Cell Data Collection \(SCDC\) Program](#). CA-SCDC aims to improve access to quality healthcare, reduce health disparities, and increase awareness of the disease by providing data, conducting analyses, and communicating information to SCD partners throughout the state.

Protect babies from Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)!



Almost half of young infants were not protected from RSV last season because they didn't get RSV antibodies and their mom didn't get maternal vaccination

ACIP recommends either:

- Maternal RSV vaccination (32-36 weeks); or
- Nirsevimab for young infants

We are entering RSV season. Clinicians, talk to pregnant patients and new parents about protecting young babies from RSV

bit.ly/mm7338a2
SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

* Internet survey of 2,263 current and recently pregnant women – 2023-24 RSV season
MMWR

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the most common cause of hospitalization among U.S. infants. Receipt of either a maternal RSV vaccine or administration of RSV antibody (nirsevimab) to infants was first recommended during the 2023–24 RSV season. Enhanced measures to implement provider RSV immunization recommendations are needed to protect infants from severe RSV disease. Read more [HERE](#).

Study on the treatment preferences of Latinas diagnosed

with postpartum depression

Please distribute these flyers ([English Spanish](#)) noting the opportunity to participate. Your support in sharing this flyer will help us reach a broader audience and gather valuable insights from participants who meet our criteria. Immigration status is not an issue - undocumented, citizen, LPR, immigrant, etc.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration. If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to reach out.

Marta Lopez LCSW Mental Health Services Phone: 909-268-4659

Fighting for Reproductive Justice While Incarcerated – New Report

Last week, the ACLU of Northern California, in collaboration with ACLU of Southern California, ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties, and ACLU California Action, released a report: [Fighting for Reproductive Justice While Incarcerated](#), which reviews current barriers to reproductive justice faced by incarcerated people in California state prisons and local and municipal jails.

This report is an update of our prior publication from 2016, *Reproductive Health Behind Bars in California*, which analyzed the extent to which California jails were putting people's health at risk by denying, delaying, and ignoring critical reproductive health care. The years since 2016 have seen sweeping reforms to access to reproductive health care for incarcerated people, but also significant challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 overturning of *Roe* by the Supreme Court. Against this national backdrop and as we face another Trump presidency, advocates in California will need to continue grappling with questions about what a state with strong reproductive *rights* must do to continue moving our state towards reproductive *justice*. *Fighting for Reproductive Justice While Incarcerated* evaluates this question from the perspective of those behind bars in California jails and prisons. This report highlights the remaining barriers that conviction and incarceration impose with respect to bodily autonomy, family unity, and reproductive futures, and proposes solutions to these challenges.

We particularly hope that advocates who work on behalf of or directly with incarcerated people and their families will find this report helpful as a resource for existing laws, challenges, and opportunities to strengthen access to reproductive justice for those behind bars. See also the [one-pager](#) that folks can use to help get the word out about the report.

Save the Date

Weds Jan. 15 2pm-3:30pm

Black & Indigenous & Pacific Islander midwives in California: The importance of culturally concordant care & midwifery to address racism-based disparities

Join Midwifery Access California and the California Coalition for Black Birth Justice for a panel discussion with Black, Indigenous and Pacific Islander midwifery leaders in California.

This webinar will be moderated by Linda Janet Holmes – writer, biographer, oral historian, curator, long-time women's health activist and author of *Safe in a Midwife's Hands* and *Listen to Me Good – The Story of an Alabama Midwife*.

[Register here](#)

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