



"Deemed Eligible" Infants Going Through the CHDP Gateway

Background-- "Deemed eligible" infants don't need to submit regular Medi-Cal applications to keep Medi-Cal up to their first birthdays: Infants whose mother's had Medi-Cal for the delivery are "deemed" to have submitted an application at birth, and they are also "deemed eligible" for full-scope Medi-Cal until the first birthday as long as they live with the mother in California.

These infants do *not* have to submit a regular Medi-Cal application to get a Medi-Cal card to use until they turn a year old; instead, they can be enrolled in Medi-Cal any time before their first birthdays through a "shortcut," such as telephoning the mother's eligibility worker or completing and faxing or mailing the county the one-page Newborn Referral Form. These infants do *not* need Social Security Numbers or any verifications before turning age one.

The Problem-- The CHDP Gateway will cut off kids whose families don't submit regular Medi-Cal applications: Starting July 1, low-income children under 19 will be able to apply for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families at participating medical offices and start coverage the very same day through the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) "Gateway" Program. But any child—even a "deemed eligible" infant-- who starts Medi-Cal coverage through the CHDP Gateway will automatically lose coverage at the end of the month after the CHDP visit if the family has not submitted a regular Medi-Cal application to the "single point of entry" (SPE) in Sacramento by then. This loss of coverage should not happen to any child, much less "deemed eligible" infants, since they remain eligible at least until age one regardless of whether the family sends in a regular Medi-Cal application.

SB 24 (Figueroa) and proposals in the state budget process would fix this problem. But even if they are adopted, the state has indicated it would likely take at least nine to 12 months to re-program the CHDP Gateway computers.

State's suggestion for "deemed eligible" infants going through the CHDP Gateway-- Refer the infant to the county after applying through the Gateway:

The State Department of Health Services (DHS) says that after starting Medi-Cal through the CHDP Gateway, the family should *also* contact the county. This way, the infant starts Medi-Cal the day of the CHDP visit, and the family will not need to send in a regular Medi-Cal application in order to avoid automatic termination of the infant's Medi-Cal at the end of the next month.

But phoning the county isn't a real option for the mothers in many cases: they often do not have a number for a worker due to turnover, and most counties have extremely limited phone hours now anyway: what if the mother can't get through? Will overburdened CHDP providers fill out or even just stock up on and hand out an extra form, the Newborn Referral Form? These and many other questions remain.

What happens at the county if an infant is already enrolled through the CHDP Gateway at the time he or she is "referred" to the county for enrollment in Medi-Cal? We are waiting for the DHS Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch to clarify this.

Infants who enroll through the CHDP Gateway will be given a Medi-Cal eligibility number the day of the CHDP visit and will be sent a plastic card. The Medi-Cal number will be tied to the Gateway "aid code" in the state's Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS); the problem is that the Gateway aid code automatically cuts off by a certain date. For infants referred to the county after starting Medi-Cal through the Gateway, it seems the county eligibility workers should be instructed to change the aid code to one which "stays on" in MEDS at least until the infant's first birthday.

To try to make the process go smoothly, the family should inform the county of the Medi-Cal number assigned to the infant by the CHDP Gateway. Otherwise, the infant may end up with two different Medi-Cal eligibility numbers and cards, and that could create confusion and be a barrier to access.

What if the family doesn't have the CHDP number with it when referring the infant to Medi-Cal for enrollment up to the first birthday? Or uses a version of the Newborn Referral Form with no place for the infant's number? We are also waiting for DHS Eligibility to explain what to expect at the county in these situations.

If a "deemed eligible" infant is referred to the county, will the CHDP Gateway still send the family a regular Medi-Cal application with a notice saying the family must complete and submit it to the SPE by a certain date to avoid the infant losing coverage? If the infant is referred to the county early enough, and the counties "shut off" Gateway coverage at the same time they "switch on" an infant's "deemed eligibility" coverage, the application and notice would not be sent out from the SPE. But if the timing is off, the application and notice could be sent out, and that could be very confusing to the family.

What if the CHDP Gateway cuts off an infant from Medi-Cal before he or she has been referred to the county for the "deemed eligibility" program? If an infant is "deemed eligible," he or she still has a legal right to keep Medi-Cal at least until the first birthday, and it is wrong to end the child's coverage. Contact your local Legal Services, MCHA, or other advocacy group for assistance.

You can also "refer" the infant to the county by phone or with a Newborn Referral Form right away: **remember, a "deemed eligible" infant can be enrolled into Medi-Cal with a "shortcut" any time before his or her first birthday.**

How can I get a copy of the Newborn Referral Form? One is attached, and photocopies are accepted. You can also call the mother's eligibility worker and/or the county's Medi-Cal eligibility supervisor. The form ID number is MC 330 NRF.

Please note that DHS is expected to issue a new, even simpler Newborn Referral Form any day now. You can check in with your county about this, check the State DHS website at www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/mcpd/MEB/ACLs/ACWDLs.htm, or contact MCHA or the

Health Consumer Center 800-896-3203