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Medi-Cal's *Non-Medical* Transportation Benefit (NMT)

What is Medi-Cal's "non-medical transportation benefit"? NMT is transportation to and from a service that Medi-Cal covers. It's for people who have no other way to get to the service and back. One common example is getting a ride from a transportation company on the state's approved list (discussed below). Sometimes, bus, train, cab, Lyft, or Uber fare is covered.

Eligible round trips include visits to a doctor or midwife or for vaccinations, lab tests, or x-rays, picking up prescription medications, medical equipment, or medical devices, attending to a sick baby in the hospital, or to receive any other Medi-Cal-covered service, including care for mental health, substance use disorder, vision, or dental.

This "*non-medical*" transportation is in addition to: a) medical transportation for emergencies by ambulance or air; and b) medical transportation for non-emergencies, such as with a wheelchair van or gurney or litter van for people who can't use transportation without help. Some rules for non-emergency *medical* transportation (NEMT) differ from those for NMT. In this info sheet, we focus on NMT for people able to use transportation on their own.

Who qualifies for Medi-Cal's transportation services? All Medi-Cal beneficiaries may qualify, regardless of whether the person is in a health plan or in "regular" (fee-for-service) Medi-Cal. This includes pregnant individuals to the end of the 12-month post-pregnancy period, *regardless* of immigration status. However, the state has so far excluded people in temporary Presumptive Eligibility Medi-Cal from transportation benefits.

Distance? Time? How many rides? There shouldn't be any limitation on the distance or time for the travel or how many times the transportation benefit may be used so long as the person continues to be eligible for Medi-Cal and they lack other transportation to health care.

Attendants, parents, siblings: Transportation is also covered for a person to go with the Medi-Cal beneficiary when necessary, such as someone to accompany an elderly person, or a parent and minor siblings when the beneficiary is a child being taken to a medical visit.

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.

Lodging and meals: These can be covered in some cases. See next two sections.

Medi-Cal NMT for Health Plan Members

Plan members may qualify for non-medical transportation not only to medical visits but also to dental, specialty mental health, and to pick up prescription medications under Medi-Cal Rx.

In addition to the actual transportation, plans must also cover lodging and meals when necessary for the plan member to access the medical service.

Plans can provide the service in different ways, such as using bus, light-rail or ferry vouchers or tokens, paying cab, Lyft or Uber fares, or reimbursing for gas, mileage, and parking expenses. Some plans have contracts with transportation providers to give members rides.

The plan's Member Services Guide must explain what transportation and transportation-related services the plan offers and how members can access them.

How do plan members get non-medical transportation?

The plan's Member Services Guide should be consulted and/or the plan's Member Services Department should be contacted.

Some plans use a request form that requires a provider's certification in writing and the plan's approval. Other plans take requests and grant approval for non-medical transportation over the phone. Still others have recently begun providing NMT (via Lyft or Uber) for any member who is either pregnant or a young child. For some plans, the beneficiary can arrange transportation directly on their own by contacting a local transportation provider on this list: [Approved NMT Providers](#). In sum, how a plan member gets access to Medi-Cal's transportation benefit varies by plan.

- **For Los Angeles County plan members, here are the Member Services or dedicated transportation services phone numbers to find out the process a plan uses for requests:**
 - Anthem Blue Cross: (888) 285-7801
 - Blue Shield Promise (877) 433-2178
 - Health Net: (800) 675-6110
 - Kaiser: (800) 464-4000
 - LA Care: (888) 452-2273
 - Molina: (800) 526-8196
- **For plan members residing outside of Los Angeles County**, the list of plan contact information is here: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MMCDHealthPlanDir.aspx>.

Who to contact about problems accessing Medi-Cal transportation benefits from a plan?

If there are access problems after the plan has been contacted and the request form (if required) has been submitted, the provider, beneficiary, or other person chosen by the

beneficiary can email DHCSNMT@dhcs.ca.gov. No personal information should be included in the first email: DHCS staff replies with a secure email asking for the beneficiary's information.

Medi-Cal NMT Fee-for-Service Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries who are most likely to be in fee-for-service (FFS) Medi-Cal are pregnant individuals, those within the 12-month post-pregnancy period, foster children, and some seniors and people with disabilities.

How do Medi-Cal fee-for-service beneficiaries access non-medical transportation?

No Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) is required for non-medical transportation in FFS.

The beneficiary or their provider or other person acting for them can directly contact a non-medical transportation provider serving their county from those on this state-maintained list: [Approved NMT Providers](#). **Calls to a few different providers may be needed** as there are gaps in the list or listed providers may not be available when the beneficiary needs a ride.

Who to contact about problems accessing Medi-Cal's transportation benefit in FFS?

Providers, beneficiaries, and others should email the state at DHCSNMT@dhcs.ca.gov if they are unable to secure non-medical transportation on their own using the Approved NMT Provider list.

The state should also be contacted about how to get Medi-Cal coverage for **lodging, meals or other transportation-related services** for a FFS beneficiary. As of this writing, a regular process for covering anything other than the actual transportation has not yet been set up in FFS, but case-by-case help might be available by making a request directly to DHCSNMT@dhcs.ca.gov.

Special Note about Transportation, Lodging, and Meals to Medi-Cal Abortion Services

Within California, abortion access is uneven. More than half of the state's abortion clinics are concentrated in five counties, and 22 counties have no abortion clinics at all. These 22 counties are concentrated along the state's eastern flank, spanning Modoc in the north to Inyo in the south. See, e.g., [No abortion services in much of CA](#)

California operates its own abortion services program for state residents without any federal funds at all. To streamline, the state piggybacks onto Medi-Cal's administrative structure. **This means that all Medi-Cal beneficiaries anywhere in California who lack transportation may use the transportation benefit to access abortion services** in person from a midwife or doctor or to pick up prescription medications.

Medi-Cal is only for residents of California. The state will fund abortion services for out-of-state residents, but not through Medi-Cal. Details on how non-state residents can access abortion services in CA and how abortion providers can be reimbursed for services to out-of-state residents retroactively to July 1, 2022 should be available soon. Please stay tuned.

References

- <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/Transportation.aspx>
 - Frequently Asked Questions for Medi-Cal Transportation Services
 - [General Information](#)
 - [Medi-Cal Beneficiaries - Fee-For-Service and Managed Care](#)
 - [Medi-Cal Providers](#)
- [APL 22-008](#) (May 18, 2022): Non-Emergency Medical and Non-Medical Transportation Services and Related Travel Expenses (Supersedes APL 17-010), see pages 7-13.
- [DPL 18-001](#) (April 26, 2018): Non-Emergency Medical and Non-Medical Transportation Services and Related Travel Expenses
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on Non-Emergency Medical and Non-Medical Transportation Services
- [Welf. & Inst. C. § 14132\(ad\)](#): This is the state statute that makes the transportation benefit part of Medi-Cal.

Questions? Please contact lucygmas@gmail.com.