

## I HAVE MEDI-CAL – HOW DO I GET TREATMENT FOR AUTISM?

### Medi-Cal to Cover Behavioral Health Treatment for Autism Starting September 15, 2014

**Who is eligible?** Any individual age 0-21 who has Medi-Cal as primary or secondary insurance. We hope to get the benefit extended above age 21 in the future.

**What kind of treatment can I get?** The benefit includes “Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT), including applied behavior analysis and other evidence-based behavior intervention programs that develop, or restore, to the maximum extent practicable, the functioning of an individual with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Treatment includes the development of a treatment plan at the expense of the Managed Care Plan. Speech, occupational and physical therapy are also covered benefits through Medi-Cal as well as psychology, psychiatry and counseling services

**How do I get treatment?** Contact your Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (e.g., Kaiser, Anthem BlueCross, LACares, Health Plan of San Mateo) . The number is on the back of your insurance card. Ask the plan what is necessary to get behavioral health treatment. Also contact your primary care physician and ask for a referral for behavioral health treatment.

**What if I don’t have a Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan but have a fee for service plan instead or don’t know what kind of Medi-Cal plan I have?** Call the number on the back of your insurance card and ask how to access treatment. Ask your primary Care physician how to access treatment. E-mail [ABAInfo@dmhc.ca.gov](mailto:ABAInfo@dmhc.ca.gov) for help.

**How long will it take to get treatment?** Managed Care Plans must provide timely access to care which for mental health services is 10 calendar days. The creation of this benefit is fast, so all plans may not have provider networks established on day one and some patience may be required at first. However plans are still obligated to provide timely treatment even if they need to arrange care through a non-network provider.

**What if I don’t have a diagnosis?** Ask your managed care plan and primary care for a referral for an autism evaluation. Again waiting lists are not permissible longer than 10 days. Your child should be able to start treatment without a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation if an evaluation is not immediately available. If you have any problems, file a complaint as described below.

**What if my child is already getting treatment through the regional center?** At this time your child will continue to be able to receive treatment through the regional center for the foreseeable future. If you are not receiving adequate treatment from the regional center, contact your managed care plan and request treatment.

**What if my child is already getting treatment from another source?** Your child will be entitled to continuity of care up to 12 months. You should request to keep your same provider.

**What do I do if I am put on a waiting list, told treatment is not available or have any other problem?**

1. File a written grievance with your health plan, send by certified mail and save a copy. If you can’t do that, call and file a grievance and get a reference number. If you do not file a grievance there is no evidence you are dissatisfied. You are much more likely to get treatment if you file a complaint. The health plan cannot retaliate.
2. Send an e-mail to the Department of Health Care Services ([ABAInfo@DHCS.CA.GOV](mailto:ABAInfo@DHCS.CA.GOV)) and register a complaint
3. Please CC the advocates ([MediCalAutismBenefit@yahoo.com](mailto:MediCalAutismBenefit@yahoo.com)) on the e-mail to DHCS so we can track the issues families encounter and develop solutions.
4. Call the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) at 888- 466-2219 and register a complaint. It is important that you do all the above steps because it will not be clear which agency regulates your plan’s provider network.

## **Good News and Potential Problems by Type of Child**

Provided by Autism Society Los Angeles

- 1. Children who have a diagnosis on the autism spectrum but who are not eligible for regional center services:** Good news - If the child is on Medi-Cal, they can call their Managed Care Plan starting on Monday and ask for a list of providers. Potential Problems - It's going to take a while for the Managed Care Plans to get this up and running and there might be a small amount of provider options. We are hoping this is not the case.
- 2. Children who are clients of a regional center BUT the regional centers don't give them needed behavior therapy:** Good news: If the child is on Medi-Cal, call your plan. (If your child isn't on Medi-Cal, you should apply! Children with autism may be eligible for Medi-Cal based on their disability, regardless of their parents' income. Getting your child on Medi-Cal will not only will help your family but it will bring needed dollars into our state from the federal government. Talk to your regional center and they will help you apply.) Potential problems - See #1
- 3. Children who are clients of a regional center and are lucky enough to live in an area with a good regional center that actually provides them necessary behavioral therapy and who is on Medi-Cal:** Good news - You are entitled to stay with your provider and with regional center providing the funding for at least the short term. Potential problems - At this point, there is only a guarantee of "continuity of care for up to 12 months." We are pushing for much longer, but we don't know yet. This means that if your provider does not agree to accept Medi-Cal, you may be required to change behavioral agencies at some. We are advocating strongly against this but we don't know what will happen.
- 4. Children who receive behavioral therapy paid for by their private insurance AND the child is also on Medi-Cal:** Good news: Medi-Cal will pay for the co-pays and deductibles. Potential problems – Medi-Cal will only cover cost sharing if you use a network provider and networks are not yet set up so this option may not yet be available.
- 5. Children who have self-funded insurance that doesn't cover behavioral health treatments and currently receive behavior funding from their regional centers:** Good news - You will be able to stay with regional center funding for the time being. Potential problems - If your child also has Medi-Cal, your regional center will require you to shift funding to them if your child is eligible based on their disability. If you don't have Medi-Cal, your regional center may ask that you apply for Medi-Cal.
- 6. Children who are undocumented and are, therefore, not eligible for Medi-Cal:** Good news: Regional centers will continue funding your behavior therapy. Potential problems - You don't have health insurance.