

December 15, 2014

Via Email

Dear Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Controllers, Communicable Disease Controllers, and Other Community Partners: Welcome to *STD Control Branch Health Reform eUpdate #7*. In this issue, we discuss: **I) [Open Enrollment \(2014-2015\)](#)** and **II) [Criminal Justice-Involved Populations](#)**. This issue also features a one-page fact sheet on **III) [How to Help Uninsured Individuals Find Health Coverage in California](#)**.

I) Open Enrollment (2014-2015)

Covered California

On November 15, 2014, Covered California began open enrollment, which runs through February 15, 2015. During this time, individuals seeking coverage can sign up for new health coverage or renew their existing plans for coverage during 2015. It is important for people with existing coverage to update their eligibility information to report any changes in income and other life events (e.g., births), learn about any changes in their monthly premium amounts, and to switch plans, if needed. For fact sheets and other materials on open enrollment, visit <http://www.coveredca.com/fact-sheets/>. For more information about renewing existing coverage in Covered California, visit <http://www.coveredca.com/youre-in/questions-about-renewal/>.

Covered California is dedicating resources to increase outreach to Latinos and other communities under-represented during the first round of enrollment, including through fact sheets on immigration status and eligibility in English¹ and Spanish,² outreach to health fairs, a statewide bus tour, and multi-media campaigns. It is important for uninsured individuals to enroll now because the fee for not having health coverage is increasing in 2015. For more information on fees and exemptions, visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/fees-exemptions/fee-for-not-being-covered/>.

Medi-Cal

Medi-Cal enrollment is year-round. However, people enrolled in Medi-Cal need to renew their coverage eligibility each year. According to the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), from June through October 2014, about 5 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries were sent renewal packets seeking information needed to continue their coverage. Beneficiaries who fail to respond are sent a discontinuation notice,³ which informs individuals they have up to 90 days to submit the required information. Persons who receive termination notices and who need assistance should contact their local legal aid program by contacting the Health Consumer Alliance at (888) 804-3536.

¹ http://hbex.coveredca.com/toolkit/PDFs-Collateral/Immigration_lay11_FIN_Interactive.pdf

² http://hbex.coveredca.com/toolkit/PDFs-Collateral/Immigration_lay11_SP_FIN_Interactive.pdf

³ <http://www.presstelegram.com/government-and-politics/20141119/thousands-of-non-english-speakers-could-lose-medi-cal-benefits>

II) Criminal Justice-Involved Populations

People who are incarcerated have high rates of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection because HCV is transmitted through sharing of drug injection equipment and because people who inject drugs are at high risk for arrest.⁴ Communities disproportionately affected by incarceration--particularly young African American and Latino males—also experience higher rates of HIV and STDs, in part due to the disruption of their sexual networks.⁵ Given these disparities, it is important to ensure that persons returning from prisons and jails are enrolled in coverage and linked to health care, including HIV, HCV, and STD preventive services, as well as housing, education, and employment.

Coverage expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) presents an opportunity to ensure that people released from prisons and jails are enrolled in coverage and linked to health care and other support services. Although federal law restricts the use of Medicaid [Medi-Cal] to finance health care provided to beneficiaries while they are incarcerated, it can be used to pay for hospitalizations longer than 24 hours that occur during incarceration, which can result in significant state and county cost savings.⁶ To take advantage of this policy, prisons and jails can enroll incarcerated individuals in Medi-Cal and then suspend their coverage prior to release.⁷ Currently, most counties in California enroll incarcerated individuals and persons on probation in health coverage (typically Medi-Cal) or are planning to do so in the next year.⁷ Some local health departments, health care providers, and community-based organizations have also partnered to develop comprehensive health homes specifically for prison and jail reentry populations, such as the Transitions Clinic in San Francisco. For general information on ACA and the criminal justice system, visit <http://www.ncja.org/issues-and-legislation/aca>. For more information from a survey of local county activities in enrolling county jail populations in Medi-Cal coverage, visit http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/211/ac/6/484/CountyEnrollmentSurvey_singles.pdf. For more information about the Transitions Clinic, visit <http://www.transitionsclinic.org/>.

Outreach to persons returning from prisons and jails is timely given the recent passage of Proposition 47 (the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act), which, according to the California Secretary of State's Office:

- “Requires a misdemeanor sentence instead of a felony for certain drug possession offenses [and other specified crimes...]
- Requires resentencing for persons serving felony sentences for these offenses unless court finds unreasonable public safety risk.
- Applies savings to mental health and drug treatment programs, K–12 schools, and crime victims.”

For more information, visit <http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/en/propositions/47/>.

⁴ Fox R, Currie S, Evans J. Hepatitis C infection among prisoners in the California state correctional system. *Clinical Infectious Disease*. 2005;41(2):177-186.

⁵ Khan M, Dohert I, Schoenbach V et al. Incarceration and high-risk sex partnerships among men in the United States. *J Urban Health*. Jul 2009; 86(4): 584–601.

⁶ csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/ACA-Medicaid-Expansion-Policy-Brief.pdf

⁷ http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/211/ac/6/484/CountyEnrollmentSurvey_singles.pdf

What can local health departments and community-based organizations do to promote enrollment, including for persons returning from prisons and jails?

- Promote open enrollment in Covered California, including Medi-Cal, for program participants, including persons released from prisons and jails to the community. For fact sheets and other materials on open enrollment, visit <http://www.coveredca.com/fact-sheets/>.
- Collaborate with the local sheriff's department to link people released from prisons and to jails to preventive services for HIV, HCV, and STDs. For more information on health coverage enrollment for local jail populations, visit <http://www.safeandjust.org/resources/2013-04-health-coverage-enrollment-toolkit>.

III) How to help uninsured individuals find health coverage in California

1. Gather informational materials and become familiar with them

- a) Print out this page (page 3) and keep it in a convenient location
- b) Download and print Covered California printable materials to read and handout at <http://hbex.coveredca.com/toolkit/collateral.shtml>.
- c) Save this link as a "favorite" on your web browser (i.e., Internet Explorer, Firefox) and access the link to help people find assistance with enrolling in coverage.
 - Find help near you (<https://www.coveredca.com/enrollment-assistance/>)

2. Ask people if they have insurance. If they do not have insurance, tell them:

The health care system is changing. California residents can now enroll in health coverage through the state marketplace – Covered California. Also, Medi-Cal has expanded for people who qualify for free and low-cost coverage. To find out if you qualify and to enroll in coverage, you can:

- a) Call Covered California and enroll by phone:⁸
 - 1 (800) 300-1506 (English)
 - 1 (800) 300-0213 (Spanish)
- b) Go to an in-person, certified enrollment counselor in your area. I can help you find help near you. What is your zip code? (See <https://www.coveredca.com/enrollment-assistance/>)
- c) Enroll online through the Covered California website: www.coveredca.com

⁸ For a complete list of service numbers by language, visit <http://hbex.coveredca.com/service-center/>.