



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



The following Frequently Asked Questions document provides additional guidance and clarification to Medi-Cal beneficiaries, providers, plan partners, and other interested parties, regarding the January 2021 transition of Medi-Cal's pharmacy benefit (collectively referred to as "Medi-Cal Rx"). As the Department of Health Care Services (Department) receives additional questions, this document will be updated as indicated by the version number and date in the footer.

For information regarding Medi-Cal Rx, please visit the Department's dedicated [Medi-Cal Rx: Transition website](#). In addition, general questions regarding Medi-Cal Rx may also be submitted to the Department via email at RxCarveOut@dhcs.ca.gov.

General Information

1. Why is the Department transitioning the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit from the Medi-Cal managed care delivery system to fee-for-service delivery system?

The Department is transitioning Medi-Cal pharmacy services from the Medi-Cal managed care delivery system to the Medi-Cal fee-for-service delivery system as a result of Governor Newsom's January 7, 2019 Executive Order N-01-19, for the purpose of achieving cost-savings for drug purchases made by the state, to standardize the pharmacy benefit statewide for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries and increase overall access by allowing beneficiaries to receive pharmacy services from the fee-for-service broader pharmacy network. In addition this standardization is a critical step for the success of the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiatives being proposed by the Department. For more information on CalAIM, please visit the Department's [website](#).

2. What is Medi-Cal Rx?

Medi-Cal Rx is the name the Department has given to this new system of how Medi-Cal pharmacy benefits will be administered through the fee-for-service delivery system, beginning on January 1, 2021.

3. What are the advantages of transitioning Medi-Cal pharmacy benefits from managed care to fee-for-service?

Transitioning pharmacy services from Medi-Cal managed care to fee-for-service will, among other things:

- Standardize the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit statewide, under one delivery system.
- Improve access to pharmacy services with a pharmacy network that includes the vast majority of the state's pharmacies and is generally more expansive than individual Medi-Cal managed care plan pharmacy networks.
- Apply statewide utilization management protocols to all outpatient drugs, as appropriate.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- Strengthen California's ability to negotiate state supplemental drug rebates with drug manufacturers as the largest Medicaid program in the state with approximately 13 million beneficiaries.

4. Does the Department need to seek federal approval to implement Medi-Cal Rx?

No, the Department does not need to seek federal approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services to implement Medi-Cal Rx. Since the Department is not changing the availability of the pharmacy benefit but rather is modifying which delivery system through which the benefit will be provided, no specific federal approval is required. Changes will be made administratively to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan contracts.

5. What Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans are and are not impacted by Medi-Cal Rx?

All Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, including Senior Care Action Network (SCAN), AIDS Healthcare Foundation, and Cal MediConnect Plans are impacted. Medi-Cal Rx will not apply to Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) plans.

6. Will Medi-Cal Rx apply to California Children's Services, and if yes, will Medi-Cal Rx change California Children's Services, and how does intend to address California Children's Services-unique issues?

Medi-Cal Rx will apply to California Children's Services. The Department is still evaluating the potential impacts that Medi-Cal Rx may have on California Children's Services. As more information becomes available and policy approaches are further refined, the Department will reach out to engage members of the California Children's Services Advisory Workgroup for feedback and input to help inform Medi-Cal Rx implementation efforts.

7. What will not change as part of Medi-Cal Rx?

Medi-Cal Rx will not change the following:

- The scope of the existing Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit.
- Provision of pharmacy services in an inpatient or long-term care setting (including Skilled Nursing Facilities and other Intermediate Care Facilities, regardless of delivery system).
- Existing Medi-Cal managed care pharmacy carve-outs will continue (e.g., blood factor, HIV/AIDS drugs, antipsychotics, or drugs used to treat substance use disorder).
- Any pharmacy services that are billed as a medical and/or institutional claim instead of a pharmacy claim.
- The State Fair Hearing process, as defined in applicable California state law.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



8. What pharmacy benefits will be “carved out” of Medi-Cal managed care due to Medi-Cal Rx?

As of January 1, 2021, Medi-Cal Rx will take over the responsibility from Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans for administering the following **when billed by a pharmacy on a pharmacy claim**:

- Covered Outpatient Drugs, including Physician Administered Drugs (PADs)
- Medical Supplies
- Enteral Nutritional Products

9. Does Medi-Cal Rx include pharmacy benefits billed on medical and/or institutional claims?

No, as of January 1, 2021, Medi-Cal pharmacy services billed on a medical or institutional claim by a pharmacy, or any other provider, will continue to be billed, through either Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans or the Medi-Cal fee-for-service Fiscal Intermediary, as they have been prior to January 1, 2021. This also includes drugs currently “carved-out” of managed care delivery system (e.g., blood factor, HIV/AIDS drugs, antipsychotics, or drugs used to treat substance use disorder).

Procurement Information

10. How will the Department administer Medi-Cal Rx?

The Department has released Request for Proposal #19-96125 to procure an administrative services contractor to administer the Medi-Cal fee-for-service pharmacy services for over 13 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will be responsible for providing a comprehensive suite of administrative services to the Department, which include but are not limited to, claims management, prior authorization and utilization management, pharmacy drug rebate administration, provider and beneficiary support services, and other ancillary and reporting services to support the administration of the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit.

11. What is the Medi-Cal Rx procurement timeline?

Below is the current timeline for Medi-Cal Rx procurement-related efforts. Please note that future dates are italicized and subject to change.

- July 22, 2019: Draft Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125 released for a two-week public comment period.
- August 22, 2019: Final Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125 released.
- August 29, 2019: Final Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125 questions due to the Department.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- September 17, 2019: Answers to questions related to the Final Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125 and addenda posted.
- October 1, 2019: All Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125 proposals due.
- *November 2019: Notice of Intent to Award posted to the Department's website.*
- *January 1, 2021: Medi-Cal Rx Assumption of Operations takes place.*

12. What roles and responsibilities will Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans maintain as of January 1, 2021?

Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans will be responsible for activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Overseeing and maintaining all activities necessary for enrolled Medi-Cal beneficiary care coordination and related activities, consistent with contractual obligations.
- Providing oversight and management of all the clinical aspects of pharmacy adherence, including providing disease and medication management.
- Processing and payment of all pharmacy services billed on medical and institutional claims.
- Participating in meetings related to the Medi-Cal Global Drug Utilization Review Board and other Department-driven pharmacy committee meetings.

13. What roles and responsibilities will the Department maintain as of January 1, 2021?

The Department will be responsible for activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Developing, implementing, and maintaining all Medi-Cal pharmacy policy, including, but not limited to:
 - Drug coverage
 - State supplemental drug rebates
 - Prior authorization/utilization management
- Negotiation of, and contracting for, state supplemental drug rebates.
- Reviewing and issuing final determinations regarding all prior authorization denials for Medi-Cal Rx benefits.
- Providing oversight of, and facilitation for, the State Fair Hearing process.
- Establishing Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy reimbursement methodologies, consistent with applicable state and federal requirements.
- Establishing and maintaining the Medi-Cal pharmacy provider network.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- Overseeing the Medi-Cal Global Drug Utilization Review Board and other Department-driven pharmacy committees, in collaboration with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor.
- Contract management and oversight/monitoring of the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor.

14. What roles and responsibilities will the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor assume as of January 1, 2021?

The Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will be responsible for activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Providing claims administration, processing, and payment functionalities for all pharmacy services billed on pharmacy claims.
- Overseeing coordination of benefits with other health coverage, including Medicare.
- Providing utilization management functionalities, including ensuring pharmacy prior authorization adjudication occurs within 24 hours (note: all pharmacy prior authorization denials will require the Department's review prior to final determination).
- Providing Prospective and Retrospective Drug Utilization Review (DUR) services.
- Providing drug rebate administration services, which are compliant with federal and state laws, and adhere to the Department's policies and direction.
- Providing twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week, three hundred and sixty-five (365) days per year, excluding approved holidays, or unless otherwise directed by the Department, Customer Service Center to support all provider and beneficiary calls, as well as outreach, training, and informing materials.
- Providing data feeds (at least daily) to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, Mental Health Plans, and Substance Use Disorder Plans to support their responsibilities of beneficiary care coordination, carrying out clinical aspects of pharmacy adherence, and disease and medication management.
- Providing real-time access into the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's electronic environment via a secure portal to all Medi-Cal providers (prescribers and pharmacies) and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, Mental Health Plans, and Substance Use Disorder Plans.
- Providing direct Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans liaisons to assist with care coordination and clinical issues.

15. How will the Department ensure that the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor does not use patient data, including prescription information, for any purpose other than Medi-Cal Rx administrative services?

The requirements for appropriate use of Medi-Cal beneficiary information are outlined, clearly and in detail, in Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125, which will become part of the final executed contract language. In addition, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor is required to



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



adhere to all existing state and federal requirements as well as the Department's policies relating to sensitive data and privacy.

16. Where can I find more information about the Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125?

For more information about Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125, please visit the [FI\\$Cal/Cal eProcure website](#). Final Proposals were due by October 1, 2019 at 4:00 PM PDT. Please continue to check the Department's website for updates. Additional questions regarding may be submitted to the Department via email at CSBRFP1@dhcs.ca.gov.

Transition Information

17. Will Medi-Cal Rx use a “phased” approach to transition services?

No, effective January 1, 2021, the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit will transition from the Medi-Cal managed care delivery system to fee-for-service delivery system (collectively “Medi-Cal Rx”). At the same time, the new Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will assume responsibility for all administrative services necessary to support Medi-Cal Rx, including but not limited to, claims management, prior authorization and utilization management, pharmacy drug rebate administration, provider and beneficiary support services, and other ancillary and reporting services. As mentioned in a prior response, this transition is critical step of the broader CalAIM initiatives being proposed by the Department.

18. How will the Department ensure that the knowledge and experience of Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, and other stakeholders, is leveraged in the transition process to achieve a successful continuity of services?

The Department has proactively engaged external partners in multiple ways and through multiple avenues, to ensure that knowledge and experience is leveraged to make Medi-Cal Rx successful. The Department intends to continue these types of engagement efforts and is committed to working with its external partners, including Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, counties, providers, consumer advocates, and beneficiaries, to ensure a smooth and successful transition. For example, the Department has established a dedicated Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan workgroup that will meet regularly to discuss various issues, identify best practices, and provide workable solutions and strategies to support the Department's implementation efforts.

Going forward, the Department will also continue to actively explore opportunities to streamline and enhance existing stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts around Medi-Cal, which will include targeted Medi-Cal Rx workgroup meetings and discussions to collaborate on best practices and implementation strategies that meet the needs of all impacted parties.

19. How will information about the Medi-Cal Rx transition and other related changes be communicated?

The Department will work in collaboration with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor to ensure all interested parties (including, but not limited to, Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, Mental Health Plans, Substance Use Disorder Plans, providers, and beneficiaries) are informed of transition and other related changes. Although exact timelines are still under development, communication will be disseminated via several methods including, but not limited to:

- A series of trainings and educational materials for Medi-Cal providers four to six months prior to transition; additional details will be communicated in the coming months.
- Notices to Medi-Cal beneficiaries, Managed Care Plans and fee-for-service providers, at defined intervals; additional notices will be released, as needed.
- Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan Outbound Call Campaigns to enrolled members.
- Updates to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan Member Handbook (Evidence of Coverage), as well as informing materials for other impacted entities.
- Updates to the Medi-Cal Provider Manual, as well as new provider guidance and materials published by the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor, as directed by the Department.
- Updates to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan contracts, as needed, to reflect the transition of the pharmacy benefit from managed care to fee-for-service.
- Updates to the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans rates.
- Regular updates via existing stakeholder processes and workgroups, including but not limited to, the Department's bi-monthly Stakeholder Communication Update, Medi-Cal Rx Public Forum, Medi-Cal Global Drug Utilization Review Board, Medi-Cal Pharmacy Directors' Meeting, Stakeholder Advisory Committee, California Children Services Advisory Committee, etc.

20. How will the Department ensure Medi-Cal beneficiaries transitioning to Medi-Cal Rx do not experience a disruption in their care and/or inability to access necessary prescription medications?

To assist Medi-Cal beneficiaries, providers (prescribers and pharmacies), and Managed Care Plans with the initial transition on January 1, 2021, the Department will provide for a minimum 90-day pharmacy transitional period to facilitate a smooth, productive transition, ensuring that Medi-Cal beneficiaries do not experience disruption in their access to medically necessary prescriptions while maintaining compliance with all state and federal laws related to the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit. More detailed information regarding the Medi-Cal Rx 90-day transitional period will be released in future guidance from the Department.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



21. Will the Department develop a Medi-Cal Rx transition plan, and, if so, what components will that plan include?

Yes, pursuant to the requirements outlined in Request For Proposal #19-96125, Exhibit A, Attachment I – Scope of Work – Takeover, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will develop a Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy transition approach/plan to include, at a minimum, processes for:

- Providing sufficient notice and flexibility for Medi-Cal pharmacies and prescribers to take all necessary steps to acclimate to the new Medi-Cal Rx Contractor, the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List, and associated processes.
- Providing appropriate notice and related materials from the Department and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans to Medi-Cal beneficiaries regarding the transition.
- Providing temporary flexibility for obtaining prior authorization on drugs dispensed during the transition period by allowing ongoing (drug treatments initiated prior to January 1, 2021) and newly prescribed drugs to be dispensed and billed without first having an approved prior authorization. However, prospective Drug Utilization Review requirements for drug safety will still apply.
- Pharmacy, provider, and beneficiary assistance, including ensuring that affected parties receive appropriate notification of, and additional information related to, the Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy transitional period and related processes.

Data Feeds, Electronic Access & Other Clinical Supports

22. Will Medi-Cal Rx provide the pharmacy data and necessary electronic access for Medi-Cal providers, Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, and other entities to support care coordination?

Yes, Medi-Cal Rx will provide data feeds (at least daily) to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, Mental Health Plans, and Substance Use Disorder Plans to support their responsibilities of beneficiary care coordination, carrying out clinical aspects of pharmacy adherence, and disease and medication management.

In addition, Medi-Cal Rx will provide real-time access into the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's electronic environment via a secure portal to all Medi-Cal providers (prescribers and pharmacies) and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, Mental Health Plans, and Substance Use Disorder Plans.

23. What additional clinical and care coordination support will Medi-Cal Rx provide to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans?

Medi-Cal Rx will provide additional care coordination support to Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans to meet their contractual obligations relating to Medi-Cal beneficiary care coordination, medication adherence, and other related responsibilities, by:



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- Providing a dedicated Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan liaison team to interface with the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, other Contractor staff, and the Contractor's portal/environment to assist with and resolve clinical pharmacy-related issues for Medi-Cal Rx, including those involving prior authorization, as directed by the Department.
- Maintaining sufficient staffing ratios of dedicated Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan liaisons to ensure this level of access is maintained for Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans.

Provider Outreach, Education & Training

24. What kinds of provider outreach, education, and training, as well as related supports, is the Department offering and/or planning to do for Medi-Cal Rx?

The Department, in collaboration with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor, is dedicated to providing Medi-Cal provider customer support services, including but not limited to, the following:

- Twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week, three hundred and sixty-five (365) days per year, excluding approved holidays, or unless otherwise directed by the Department, customer services center to support all provider calls.
- Outreach, training and informing materials to Medi-Cal providers, Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, and other entities.
- Web-based services to support communication and tools for Medi-Cal Rx.
- Real-time access into the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's electronic environment via a secure portal.
- Other services and supports to ensure a smooth and effective transition (e.g., minimum 90 day pharmacy transitional period).

In addition, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's Pharmacy Service Representatives will act on behalf of the Department to relay and provide subject-matter expertise/support regarding Medi-Cal Rx information and training materials to providers (prescribers and pharmacies) pharmacy billing agents, and plan partners, in a variety of venues. For more information, please see Request For Proposal #19-96125 Exhibit A, Attachment II – Scope of Work – Operations – Education and Outreach.

Beneficiary Customer Service & Related Supports

25. What kinds of Medi-Cal beneficiary customer service and related supports is the Department offering and/or planning to do for Medi-Cal Rx?

The Department, in collaboration with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor, is dedicated to providing beneficiary customer services and related supports, including but not limited to, the following:



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- Twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week, three hundred and sixty-five (365) days per year, excluding approved holidays, or unless otherwise directed by the Department, customer services center to support all beneficiary calls.
- Informing materials related to Medi-Cal Rx through different avenues, including but not limited to appropriate notices via U.S. Mail and web-based services (e.g., external facing internet webpage to support communication and tools for Medi-Cal Rx).
- A Medi-Cal Rx Pharmacy Locator Tool (MPL) that is available through the Pharmacy Service Portal to include all Medi-Cal Rx eligible pharmacies.
- An Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to provide:
 - Recorded information
 - Self-service options
 - Ability to request follow-ups from customer service, such as a call back phone call, information to be provided by mail or email

In addition, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's Pharmacy Service Representatives will act on behalf of the Department to relay and provide subject-matter expertise/support regarding Medi-Cal Rx information and related materials to Medi-Cal beneficiaries, in a variety of venues. For more information, please see Request For Proposal #19-96125 Exhibit A, Attachment II – Scope of Work – Operations – Education and Outreach.

Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service Reimbursement Methodology

26. For Medi-Cal pharmacies, how is the Medi-Cal fee-for-service pharmacy reimbursement methodology established, and what are the components?

Medi-Cal fee-for-service pharmacy reimbursement for covered outpatient drugs, as defined by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and in the Medi-Cal State Plan, has two components, consistent with applicable state law: (1) drug ingredient cost (average acquisition cost), and (2) a professional dispensing fee (two-tiered based on total Medicaid and non-Medicaid annual pharmacy claim volume (i.e., dispensed prescriptions):

- < 90,000 claims per year: \$13.20
- > or = 90,000 claims per year: \$10.05

For 340B claims, reimbursement is covered entity's actual drug acquisition cost plus the appropriate professional dispensing fee.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



27. As a result of Medi-Cal Rx, will the Department be making changes to existing fee-for-service pharmacy reimbursement methodologies, including for specialty drugs?

The Department will utilize drug reimbursement methodologies as defined in state law and the Medi-Cal State Plan. If the Department implements the use of Maximum Allowable Ingredient Costs (MAICs) for drugs, which have three (3) or more generically equivalent options available, reimbursement for the affected drug(s) may change if the MAIC is “lesser of” the two other benchmarks defined in state law, i.e., National Average Drug Acquisition Cost and Federal Upper Limit.

Policy Considerations

28. What is Medi-Cal’s Contract Drugs List?

The Department maintains the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List, which is the Department’s preferred set of covered drugs and generally includes drugs for which there is a current state supplemental drug rebate agreement in place. Under the existing Medi-Cal fee-for-service pharmacy benefit, if a drug is listed on the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List, then it would not require an approved prior authorization for coverage. Alternatively, if a drug is not listed on the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List, then it would require an approved prior authorization for coverage. Please note that even if a drug is listed on the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List, it may still require an approved prior authorization for coverage; however, if a certain drug on the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List requires an approved prior authorization, then the Department’s policy would clearly articulate that requirement.

29. How will Medi-Cal Rx affect Medi-Cal’s Contract Drugs List, and does the Department take anything else into consideration for its Medi-Cal drug coverage policies?

Medi-Cal Rx will use the existing Department-approved Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List as its preferred set of covered drugs. In addition, the Department’s pharmacy drug coverage policies will also take into consideration:

- All Federal Food and Drug Administration-approved covered outpatient drugs, as defined by CMS, subject to medical necessity.
- The Department’s business rules that detail requirements for the covered outpatient drugs and non-drug products, and limitations of coverage, which include aid code, program, and/or date-specific.

30. Will Medi-Cal Rx consider local exceptions to Medi-Cal’s Contract Drugs List?

No. Medi-Cal Rx will use a single, statewide, and Department-approved Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List to standardize the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



31. How does the Department make determinations to add or delete drugs from the Contract Drugs List?

The Department can add drugs to the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List based upon receipt of either (1) an external Individual Drug Petition request from a manufacturer, physician, and/or pharmacist, or (2) a Department-initiated Individual Drug Petition review, if applicable. Once an IDP is received, the Department conducts an extensive review of the request taking into consideration evidence-based literature, industry best practices, and the following drug review criteria, which are outlined in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14105.39(c)(1) and (2):

- The safety of the drug
- The effectiveness of the drug
- The essential need of the drug
- The potential for misuse of the drug
- The cost of the drug to the program

In addition to conducting its own internal review, the Department also consults with the Medi-Cal Drug Advisory Committee (Committee), as required by Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14105.4. The Committee is comprised of members who are appointed by the Department's Director – including community physicians and pharmacists, faculty members from academic pharmacy institutions, and Medi-Cal beneficiaries – and assists the Department by providing written recommendations to inform decision-making regarding adding and/or deleting, drug(s) from the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List. The Committee's final response with detailed, drug-by-drug recommendations is due within 30 calendar days of the Department requesting consultation, and takes into consideration the Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14105.39(c)(1) and (2) criteria, as well as additional information such as generic name, brand name, Federal Food and Drug Administration-approved indications, manufacturer, fiscal/cost impact, clinical criteria, etc.

The Department then makes an informed and documented decision whether or not to add the drug to the Medi-Cal Contract Drugs List based upon the Committee's recommendations, state law requirements, and other relevant factors.

32. Will the Department consider making policy changes to allow for multi-year prior authorization approvals?

Yes. As part of Medi-Cal Rx, the Department is considering allowing multi-year prior authorization for certain disease conditions and classes of drugs based upon established and documented clinical criteria (e.g. maintenance drugs with a low risk of adverse events). The following are potential categories of drugs for consideration: anti-hypertensives, diabetes management, anticonvulsants, asthma therapy, Parkinson's Disease therapy, etc.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



33. Will the Department consider making policy changes to allow for enhanced and/or expanded auto-adjudication functionalities?

Yes. As part of Medi-Cal Rx, the Department is considering enhancing and/or expanding auto-adjudication functionalities (i.e., automated claim approval and payment) to reduce the number of drugs with prior authorization requirements that require manual review. The following are potential categories of drugs for consideration: nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), histamine-2 receptor blockers (H2 Blockers), proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), discharge medications, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), antihistamines, lipid lowering medications, diuretics, etc.

34. Will Medi-Cal Rx include opioid management services?

Medi-Cal Rx will provide opioid management services in accordance with [House Resolution 6 Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment \(SUPPORT\) for Patients and Communities Act](#), Medi-Cal pharmacy policy and procedures, and clinically appropriate, evidence-based guidelines. In addition, as part of Medi-Cal Rx, the Department has solicited Proposals as part of the Request for Proposal to further explore enhanced opioid management utilization management tools that go above and beyond what is required by federal law. The Department will evaluate all Proposals received.

35. Will Medi-Cal Rx include a pharmacy lock-in program?

As part of the Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125, the Department has solicited Proposals to explore further pharmacy lock-in program options, including, but not limited to, things such as: use of multiple pharmacies, different prescribers of controlled substances, and number of controlled substances. The Department will evaluate all Proposals received. In addition, the Department is aware that approximately 50 percent of Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans utilize pharmacy lock-in programs today, so through stakeholder engagement efforts, the Department will be looking to learn more and utilize best practices for Medi-Cal Rx.

Prior Authorization/Utilization Management

36. Under Medi-Cal Rx, how will prior authorization requests be reviewed and adjudicated?

For all prior authorization requests, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will ensure that within 24 hours, the Medi-Cal provider will receive a confirmation and/or notice of approval, deferral, modification, and/or referral to second level-review, as directed by the Department. This includes the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's pharmacist's review of all denials.

- If approved, the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will notify the submitting Medi-Cal Rx provider.
- If deferred (more information is needed), the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will notify the provider and beneficiary, and complete processing if information is provided in the specified timeframe, as directed by the Department.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- If denial is recommended, the prior authorization request along with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's pharmacist's reasoning for denial will be referred to the Department for final determination, as described in question #38 below.
- If service is deferred, denied or modified, the Contractor will notify the provider and mail appropriate notice to the beneficiary within three (3) business days.

Throughout the process, Medi-Cal providers and Managed Care Plans will be able to communicate with Medi-Cal Rx Contractor staff and access the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's electronic environment via a secure portal to assist with and resolve clinical pharmacy-related issues, including questions/concerns around Medi-Cal Rx timelines and decisions related to pending prior authorization requests.

37. What is the process for reviewing and resolving Medi-Cal Rx prior authorization denials?

The Department will be responsible for reviewing and providing a final adjudication of all Medi-Cal Rx prior authorization denials within the timeframes specified in applicable state law and internal policies/processes. Once the Department completes its review, it will recommend to the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor one of several outcomes, which are described below, by inputting the final prior authorization decision into the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's electronic environment via a secure portal:

- Defer approval until additional information is received from the submitting Medi-Cal Rx provider.
- Reverse the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's denial, and recommend approval.
- Confirm and uphold the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor's denial. If the Medi-Cal Rx denial is upheld, the Medi-Cal provider will receive appropriate notice and can appeal consistent with the requirements outlined in Request For Proposal #19-96125, Exhibit A, Attachment II – Scope of Work Operations – Claims Administration, and consistent with applicable state law requirements and Department policies/procedures.

More detailed information regarding the Medi-Cal Rx prior authorization denial process will be released in future policy guidance. Please note, as described elsewhere in this document, the Medi-Cal beneficiary also has the option to appeal a Medi-Cal Rx prior authorization denial through the State Fair Hearing process.

38. Will Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans be allowed to contract with the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor to perform prior authorization?

No. Since Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans will no longer be contractually responsible for the Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit as of January 1, 2021, all prior authorization adjudications and related processes will be handed by the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor, consistent with contractual requirements and at the direction of the Department.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



340B Federal Drug Discount Program

39. What is the federal 340B program?

Section 340B of the Public Health Services Act (Title 42 United States Code Section 256b), establishes a federal program known as the 340B Drug Pricing Program (340B program), which was created in 1992 after the adoption of the Medicaid Drug Rebate Program. The Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency under the United States Department of Health and Human Services, administers and manages the program through its Office of Pharmacy Affairs.

The 340B program requires drug manufacturers to offer drugs to certain hospitals and other health care providers (covered entities) at a greatly reduced price. By selling drugs at lower prices, participating drug manufacturers are not required to pay Medicaid drug rebates on drugs purchased through the 340B program and provided to a Medicaid beneficiary (better known as the provision against “duplicate discounts”).

40. Who utilizes the 340B program?

Section 340B(a)(4) of the Public Health Services Act (Title 42 United States Code Section 256b) specifies which covered entities are eligible to participate in the 340B program. These include qualifying hospitals, federal grantees from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Population Affairs and Indian Health Service. Eligible covered entities are defined in statute and include HRSA-supported health centers and look-alikes, Ryan White clinics and State AIDS Drug Assistance programs, Medicare/Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospitals, children’s hospitals, and other safety net providers.

When registering as a covered entity with the Health Resources and Services Administration, a covered entity may choose to not dispense 340B purchased drugs to Medicaid beneficiaries or to dispense 340B purchased drugs to Medicaid beneficiaries. HRSA maintains a file of covered entities that indicates whether the entity dispenses 340B purchased drugs to Medicaid patients. Although covered entities can purchase 340B drugs for all eligible patients, state Medicaid programs may only collect rebates on drugs purchased outside of the 340B program. Additional details are available on the Health Resources and Services Administration’s [website](#).

41. What is the interaction of our prescription drug proposal and the 340B program?

Drugs purchased under 340B pricing and dispensed to Medicaid enrollees are excluded from both federal and state rebate collection. This exclusion prevents drug manufacturers from providing duplicate discounts on drugs purchased through the 340B program.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



In October 2009, California codified a pre-existing policy that requires 340B covered entities to dispense only 340B inventory to Medi-Cal beneficiaries, and bill at their actual acquisition cost for those drugs when dispensed through the Medi-Cal fee-for-service delivery system, consistent with Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14105.46. The 340B actual acquisition cost billing requirement only applies to the fee-for-service delivery system.

In the managed care delivery system, 340B drugs dispensed to Medi-Cal beneficiaries are not subject to the Medi-Cal fee-for-service acquisition-cost billing requirements. This allows covered entities and the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans and/or contracted Pharmacy Benefits Managers to negotiate reimbursement arrangements that results in a higher reimbursement to the 340B covered entity in the managed care delivery system when compared to how those entities are or would be reimbursed in the Medi-Cal fee-for-service delivery system. These profits are not shared with the state, nor are the amounts of such profits known to the state.

The proposed prescription drug carve out allows for uniformity of policy and improved oversight of claims for medications dispensed and billed through the 340B program.

42. Does the proposal preclude a provider from continuing as a 340B entity?

No. In addition, the proposal does not change or eliminate the 340B Program in California.

43. How is the Department addressing the concerns raised as to the effect of Medi-Cal Rx on the administration of 340B programs?

The Department recognizes the important role of our safety net providers and the critical work they do for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Given this, the Department continues to work collaboratively and engage in discussions with various interested parties and stakeholders on behalf of health care facilities and groups to better understand the impact of the implementation of Medi-Cal Rx on their 340B programs and related processes, as well as to further discuss potential options for mitigation. Any such changes to mitigate concerns will need to be approved by the Administration and Legislature.

44. Has the Department collected any data or information to assess the impact to the 340B Program?

The Department has engaged interested parties and stakeholders to participate in a 340B data collection effort. In October, the Department requested that all clinics/health centers download and complete the provided data template in full and submit it to the Department. The Department is currently assessing the level of participation and completeness of the data provided in these submissions, and will be using this information to compile statewide data in order to inform future discussions within the Administration and with the Legislature and clinics/health centers. The Department will provide periodic updates on its 340B discussions and processes through its regular channels for stakeholder communication. For any additional questions and/or concerns, please submit questions via email to Clinic340BData@dhcs.ca.gov.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



Medi-Cal Rx Complaints and Grievances Resolution and Appeals Processes

45. What complaints and grievances resolution processes will Medi-Cal beneficiaries have to address pharmacy benefit issues?

The Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will be responsible for managing a process to ensure resolution of complaints and grievances raised by Medi-Cal beneficiaries and/or their Authorized Representatives (ARs), either in writing or by telephone, consistent with all applicable state and federal law requirements and Department policies/procedures. Specific requirements are outlined in Request For Proposal #19-96125, Exhibit A, Attachment II – Scope of Work Operations – Complaints and Grievances Resolution.

46. What appeals mechanism will Medi-Cal beneficiaries have to address pharmacy benefit issues?

Appeals go through the State Fair Hearing process, which is administered through the California Department of Social Services. If Medi-Cal beneficiaries do not agree with a denial or change of Medi-Cal Rx services, they can ask for a State Fair Hearing. To ask for a State Hearing, Medi-Cal beneficiaries can fill out the “State Hearing Request” form at www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/Medi-CalFairHearing.aspx, and send it to:

- California Department of Social Services
State Hearings Division
P.O. Box 944243, MS 19-37
Sacramento, CA 94244-2430

Medi-Cal beneficiaries may also call to ask for a State Fair Hearing toll-free at 1(800) 952-5253 (TTY:1-800-952-8349). Please note that the number can be very busy so you may get a message to call back later.

47. If a Medi-Cal beneficiary wants a State Fair Hearing, are there any time limitations?

Yes, Medi-Cal beneficiaries only have 90 days to ask for a hearing, consistent with applicable state law.

48. Can Medi-Cal beneficiaries still get their treatment while awaiting a State Fair Hearing decision?

Yes. To continue receiving the Medi-Cal Rx services that the denial notice is stopping and/or changing, Medi-Cal beneficiaries must ask for a State Hearing within ten days from:

- The date the notice is postmarked
- The date of personal delivery of the notice
- Before the date the notice says your treatment will stop or change



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



When requesting the State Fair Hearing, Medi-Cal beneficiaries should indicate that they want to keep getting Medi-Cal Rx services during the hearing process. Please note that it can take up to 90 days for a case to be decided and a final determination to be sent to the Medi-Cal beneficiary.

49. Can Medi-Cal beneficiaries request an expedited State Fair Hearing?

Yes. Medi-Cal beneficiaries can request an expedited hearing by submitting a letter from their doctor explaining how waiting for up to 90 days could be risky to their life and/or health. Medi-Cal beneficiaries should send the letter along with their hearing request. For more information about the State Hearing process, please visit the Department's website at: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/Medi-CalFairHearing.aspx>.

50. For appeals of Medi-Cal Rx coverage decisions by the Medi-Cal provider and/or managed care plan, will the Department create a separate Medi-Cal Rx external appeal process where independent medical experts review decisions?

No, at this time, the Department is not exploring creating a separate independent medical review process, akin to that currently overseen by the California Department of Managed Health Care, for Medi-Cal Rx. As a reminder, Medi-Cal Rx denials for pharmacy claims will not be made by Medi-Cal providers and/or Managed Care Plans, rather they will initially be made by the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor and reviewed by the Department for final determination. As mentioned elsewhere in this document, Medi-Cal providers can appeal Medi-Cal Rx denials consistent with the requirements outlined in Request For Proposal #19-96125, Exhibit A, Attachment II – Scope of Work Operations – Claims Administration, and applicable state law requirements and Department policies/procedures

Fiscal Impact/Assessment

51. Will the Department be completing a fiscal analysis prior to the transition?

Yes. The Department has completed an initial fiscal analysis for Medi-Cal Rx, and has shared this information publicly. Preliminarily, the Department anticipates approximately \$393 million in annual savings by 2023. The Department will be including the fiscal estimate for Medi-Cal Rx as part of the bi-annual Medi-Cal Estimate process.

52. What are the elements of our projected \$393 million in annual savings by 2023?

The elements of the projected \$393 million savings by 2023 include but are not limited to:

- Additional supplemental rebates resulting from a shift of drug utilization from the managed care delivery system to the FFS delivery system;



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



- Implementation of Maximum Allowable Ingredient Costs (MAICs) for drugs which have three (3) or more generically equivalent options available; and
- Reduction of costs related to administrative functions of multiple pharmacy benefits managers used by various Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans.

It is important to note, the fiscal analysis is based on current Medi-Cal fee-for-service reimbursement methodology, which includes \$10.05 / \$13.20 dispensing fees. However, 340B drugs were priced at what managed care plans paid due to the Department not having knowledge of the 340B entity acquisition cost to properly score the potential 340B savings. Therefore, potential savings associated with changes resulting to reimbursement above acquisition cost for 340B entities that currently occurs in managed care are not reflected in the current fiscal analysis.

Miscellaneous/Other Information

53. Will Medi-Cal Rx include mail order pharmacy options?

The potential for mail order pharmacy options was included in the Medi-Cal Rx Request for Proposal #19-96125. The Department will evaluate all Proposals received.

54. Will the Department make Medi-Cal pharmacy supplemental drug rebate contracts public?

No. Both state and federal law protect the confidentiality of supplemental drug rebate contracts.

55. Will the Medi-Cal Rx Contractor be required to contract with existing pharmacies in the current networks?

No. The Medi-Cal Rx Contractor will not contract with any providers. All provider enrollment activities as well as maintenance of the Medi-Cal pharmacy network will be retained by the Department.

56. How many active, California-licensed pharmacies are there, and how many of those pharmacy providers are enrolled in Medi-Cal fee-for-service?

As of May 2018, data from the Department of Consumer Affairs indicated that there were 6,633 active, California-licensed pharmacies. As of June 2019, data from the Department indicated that 6,223 were enrolled Medi-Cal fee-for-service pharmacy providers.



Medi-Cal Rx: Transitioning Medi-Cal Pharmacy Services From Managed Care To Fee-For-Service

Frequently Asked Questions



57. In what capacity will Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans and other entities be expected to participate in meetings for the Medi-Cal Global Drug Utilization Review Board and other Department-driven pharmacy committees?

Presently and ongoing post-transition, the Department expects that its Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans and other interested parties will continue to participate in meetings related to the Medi-Cal Global Drug Utilization Review Board and in other Department-driven pharmacy committees, as needed. In addition, the Department is actively evaluating and assessing how to better and more effectively engage and collaborate with Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans and other entities in discussions and decisions relating to Medi-Cal pharmacy policy on a going forward basis.