

Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) COVID-19 Response Hospital Presumptive Eligibility Flexibilities and The COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program

This document provides an overview of the shared guidance and clarification on changes to the Hospital Presumptive Eligibility Program and the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program for COVID-19 applications by the Department of Health Care Services. DHCS received federal approval on the following policy changes through the [California State Plan Amendment 20-0024](#). Announcements of these changes can be found on [DHCS's COVID-19 Medi-Cal Response](#) webpage.

Hospital Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) Flexibilities and Policy Changes:

Use of Telephonic Signatures:

Link to DHCS guidance: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Pages/HospitalPE.aspx>

Due to the ongoing Public Health Crisis, DHCS is approving immediate enrollment flexibilities for PE providers to limit potential exposure to COVID-19. Hospital Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) Enrolling Providers can utilize telephonic signatures for HPE Applications, noting in the case file "COVID-19 protocol." If the individual is not at the hospital and not experiencing an urgent health event which requires immediate care, providers should suggest to the individual to apply online using the Covered CA portal to establish ongoing eligibility for Medi-Cal or Covered California. Providers may also obtain an Authorized Representative form for the HPE applicant, allowing an individual acting on behalf of the applicant, to provide the required information to assist with the enrollment of the individual in HPE, thereby minimizing direct contact with the individual and promoting physical distancing.¹

Policy Changes to HPE:

Link to DHCS guidance: https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/newsroom/newsroom_30339_65.aspx

- 1) The Hospital Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) Program will temporarily expand PE coverage to a new coverage group of individuals who are 65 or older **and** whose income is below 138 percent of the Federal Poverty level (FPL) effective immediately. This new coverage group is referred to as the "Aged" HPE group. This coverage group is allowed two (2) periods of PE in a twelve-month period and will be assigned aid code 7D. This expansion will be effect through the end of the public health emergency.²
- 2) DHCS is also expanding presumptive eligibility periods through HPE for adults that are age 19 years and over. HPE will now provide two (2) periods of presumptive eligibility in a twelve-month period for adults age 19 and over.²

Questions concerning HPE Flexibilities should be sent to DHCSHospitalPE@dhcs.ca.gov.

¹ DHCS [HPE Flexibilities Due to COVID-19](#) Announcement (4/2)

² DHCS [New Policy Changes to the HPE Program](#) Announcement (05/22)

COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program:

Link to DHCS Guidance:

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Pages/COVID-19-Presumptive-Eligibility-Program.aspx#:~:text=The%20new%20COVID%2D19%20Uninsured,individual%2C%20for%20up%20to%2012>

As of March 18, 2020, House Resolution (H.R.) 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Section 6004, authorized state Medicaid programs to provide access to coverage for medically necessary coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment at no cost to the individual.

The new COVID-19 Uninsured Group program was implemented by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) on August 28, 2020, and covers COVID-19 diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment services, including hospitalization and all medically necessary care, at no cost to the individual, for up to 12 months or the end of the public health emergency, whichever comes first. Please see the below resources:

- [Provider NewsFlash and instructions](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [MC-374 COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program Application](#)

Upon implementation of the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application Portal, DHCS will decommission the Presumptive Eligibility (PE) for COVID-19 application process implemented on April 8, 2020.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQs copied directly from DHCS PE COVID-19 FAQs document

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Documents/COVID-19%20Uninsured%20Group%20Program/COVID-19UninsuredGroupFAQ-10.2.pdf>

1. What is the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Uninsured Group program?

The COVID-19 Uninsured Group program is a new COVID-19 program that replaces Presumptive Eligibility (PE) for COVID-19. The COVID-19 Uninsured Group program provides temporary, no cost diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment services, including all medically necessary care, which includes associated office, clinic, or emergency room visits related to COVID-19. This program is available to uninsured individuals determined eligible by a Qualified Provider (QP) based on preliminary applicant information.

2. What is a Qualified Provider (QP)?

A QP is an approved Medi-Cal provider who participates as a QP, permitted under the approved California Medicaid State Plan in relation to PE programs.

3. What is the authority for implementing the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program?

On March 18, 2020, the House Resolution (H.R.) 6201 Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Section 6004, authorized State Medicaid programs the ability to cover uninsured individuals for purposes of providing COVID-19 diagnostic testing and testing-related services, at no cost to the individuals.

4. When will the new COVID-19 Uninsured Group program changes be implemented?

The new COVID-19 Uninsured Group program changes will be implemented on August 28, 2020.

5. When does the COVID-19 Uninsured Group enrollment period begin and end?

The COVID-19 Uninsured Group enrollment period begins on the date of application and ends on the last calendar day of the 12th month from the date of the COVID-19 Uninsured Group application in which the individual was determined eligible for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group or when the Public Health Emergency ends, whichever is sooner.

6. Who is potentially eligible for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group program?

To qualify for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group, individuals must:

- Have no health insurance, or
- Have private health insurance that does not cover diagnostic testing, testing related services, and treatment services, including all medically necessary care for COVID-19, or
- Not have Medicare, or
- Are not eligible under any of the other Medi-Cal programs (with the exception of individuals who have not met their Medi-Cal Share of Cost obligation), and
- Be a California resident.

7. Can an individual who is not a California resident get coverage under the COVID-19 Uninsured Group program?

No, you must be a California resident to be eligible for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group program.

8. How does a QP access the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application Portal? To access the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application Portal, follow the instructions below.

1. Access the Medi-Cal website at <http://www.medi-cal.ca.gov/>, select “Providers” and click the “Transactions” link.
2. Enter your User ID (National Provider Identifier) and Password (Provider Identification Number) and click the “Submit” button.
3. Click the “Prgms” tab.
4. Click the “COVID-19 Uninsured Group Eligibility” link.

9. Which Internet browser should I use to access the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application Portal?

Medi-Cal recommends that providers use the Chrome browser when accessing the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application Portal to avoid any printing issues that may occur with other Internet browsers.

10. How long does it take to receive the COVID-19 Uninsured Group determination?

The QP will be able to view the applicants COVID-19 Uninsured Group eligibility determination in the Point of Service (POS) system in real-time once eligibility is determined

11. What services are covered under the COVID-19 Uninsured Group program?

All medically necessary services for COVID-19 will be covered under the COVID19 Uninsured Group program. This includes medically necessary diagnostic testing, testing-related services, hospitalization and other treatment services provided at the associated office, clinic, or emergency room visit related to COVID19. These services will be paid up to the maximum reimbursement fee-for-service (FFS) rate, in the FFS delivery system.

12. Is a Social Security Number required to apply for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group?

If an individual has a Social Security Number (SSN) it must be provided on the Application for Coverage of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Testing Costs (MC 374).

13. Is an individual’s citizenship/immigration status verified when they apply for the new COVID-19 Uninsured Group?

Yes, an individual’s citizenship/immigration status will be electronically verified. But status is not a condition of eligibility.

14. Are telephonic signatures accepted for the new COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application? Yes, in order to accept a telephonic signature, the following procedure must be followed:

1. Read the consent language aloud to the individual/Authorized Representative as it is stated on the signature page of the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application: By signing, I declare that what I say below is true and correct. • I have read and understood this PE for COVID-19 Medi-Cal Application. • The information I provided is true, correct, and complete.
2. Ask that the individual/Authorized Representative verbally acknowledge their consent
3. In the signature line, write “Verbal consent – COVID-19”
4. Be sure to document and keep documentation for all verbal consent obtained

15. Can applications for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group be retroactive?

Yes, per federal guidance, applications for the COVID-19 Uninsured Group can be retroactive to April 8, 2020. Qualified providers can submit retroactive applications to COVID19Apps@dhcs.ca.gov for review and processing.

ADDITIONAL PE COVID-19 INFORMATION

Hospitals have reached out to DHCS with additional questions, which we summarize below:

1. Are hospitals able to receive retroactive coverage with this new aid code? Concern: Patients with previous hospital visits have been denied HPE and had COVID-19 related services.

DHCS will accept PE COVID applications with an application date of April 8th, 2020 and beyond.

2. How should qualified providers process PE COVID applications for patients with non- US insurance or other insurance that does not cover COVID-19 related services (ex: SIMSA & MediExcel)?

Qualified providers should utilize the Medi-Cal Provider website to submit HPE applications for those patients. If the individual meets the eligibility criteria and is approved for HPE, providers are asked to leave them in the HPE program. However, if providers receive an error message when processing the HPE application, then re-submit application for PE for COVID and continue follow the guidance as stated on the step-by-step guide.

3. How does the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program differ from PE for COVID-19 program? What changes can we expect?

The COVID-19 Uninsured Group program is a new COVID-19 program that replaces the Presumptive Eligibility (PE) for COVID-19 program.

- *Need information on citizenship/immigration status* – an individual’s status will be requested and verified when they apply for the new COVID-19 Uninsured

Group. However, an individual's status will have no bearing on the ability of an individual to receive care or on a provider to receive reimbursement for COVID-19 testing and treatment services.

- *Periods of Presumptive Eligibility (PE)* – previously, an individual's eligibility period ended on the last day of the following month in which they applied which could be up to 60 days and DHCS allowed two periods of PE, instead of one, in a 12-month period. With this new program, an individual's eligibility period ends on the last day of the 12th month from the date of their PE application or the end of the public health emergency (PHE), whichever occurs sooner.

4. How should QP providers submit request for retroactive eligibility for a COVID PE application?

1. Submit a PE for COVID-19 application through the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Application portal.
2. If approved, you would then submit the MC 374 Application (attached) by email to COVID19Apps@dhcs.ca.gov for retroactive eligibility for COVID-19.