



Lessons from California: Eligibility for Former Foster Care Children

THE ISSUE:

Children in foster care are at higher risk of having a medical or mental health disability than the general population due to the trauma they experience from abuse and neglect, as well as removal from their families, before entering the child welfare system. Thus these children have a greater need for comprehensive health and mental health services. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires states to provide Medicaid to youth who were in foster care on their 18th birthday, or who “age out” of foster care at a higher age, and to keep them on Medicaid until they turn age 26. These youth are eligible regardless of their income. States also have the option to provide Medicaid to youth who were in foster care in another state. This coverage started on January 1, 2014.

California has implemented this law in its Medi-Cal Program and also has elected the option to cover youth who came to California from foster care in another state. A [summary](#) fact sheet of this new program provides a detailed overview. Yet there are many important decisions for states to make in order to implement this coverage in a way that is simple, streamlined and ensures these youth remain covered.

STRATEGY AND ACTIONS:

Advocates in California worked to enact [legislation](#) that required eligible youth be moved into this program without an interruption in existing Medi-Cal coverage and without requiring a new application. In addition, the legislation required the state to develop a simplified renewal form that would only need to be completed if material information was no longer accurate.

For those former foster youth not already on Medi-Cal who are seeking coverage, the state has developed a very simple one-page application [form](#). Youth can also apply through the State-based Marketplace ([Covered California](#)) and are not required to complete the entire Single Streamlined Application or the paper application. The state has provided [instructions](#) to counties about how to get these youth enrolled quickly and without requiring a full application. The county Medi-Cal offices have also developed a helpful [desk aid](#) for eligibility workers to use.

There will be additional instructions on implementing this program, including a simplified renewal process and form, so advocates should check back for more updates.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Former Foster Care
Children requirements:
SSA
1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX);
Proposed 42 CFR
§435.150.

[Federal Guidance](#)

[Covered til 26](#)