



State Assistance for Hospitals Through the Medi-Cal Program for COVID-19 Testing and Treatment

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has provided various program flexibilities and waivers for providers to ensure that Medi-Cal beneficiaries have access to medically necessary COVID-19 testing and care.

General Information

If an uninsured Californian presents at a hospital, clinic, or other provider office, what Medi-Cal programs could they be eligible for?

There are two programs an uninsured Californian may be eligible for:

- *Hospital Presumptive Eligibility (HPE):* HPE provides temporary, no share-of-cost Medi-Cal benefits during a presumptive period to individuals determined eligible by a qualified hospital based on preliminary patient information. *Note: see additional FAQs about this program below.*
- *COVID-19 Presumptive Eligibility (PE) Program:* As a result of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, state Medicaid programs can provide access to coverage for COVID-19 diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment services — including all medically necessary care — at no cost to the individual. PE for COVID-19 was implemented on April 8, 2020, and is available to individuals seeking necessary COVID-19 diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment services at no cost. This includes all medically necessary care, such as associated office, clinic, or emergency room visits related to COVID-19. *Note: see additional FAQs about this program below.*

Eligibility

What are the eligibility criteria for the HPE program?

To qualify for HPE, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- Have income below the monthly limit for household size
- Be a California resident
- Not already have Medi-Cal coverage
- If not pregnant, have not received PE enrollment benefits from any Medi-Cal PE program up to the maximum limitation allowed within the past 12 months of applying. If pregnant, have not had a PE enrollment during the current pregnancy of applying.

In addition, an individual must be in one of the following HPE groups:

- Children under 19 years old
- Parents and caretaker relatives
- Pregnant women (benefits are limited to ambulatory prenatal services)
- Former foster youth between 18 and 26 years old who were in foster care in any state on their 18th birthday or older (no income limit)
- Adults between ages 19 and 64, not pregnant, not in Medicare, and not eligible for any group stated above

What HPE-related flexibilities did DHCS provide due to COVID-19?

DHCS has provided many flexibilities for providers until the end of the public health emergency, including:

- Approving immediate enrollment flexibilities for providers to limit potential exposure to COVID-19. HPE providers can use telephonic signatures for applications, noting in the case file “COVID-19 protocol.”
- Temporarily expanding PE coverage to a new coverage group of individuals who are 65 or older **and** whose income is below 138% of the federal poverty level, effective immediately
- Allowing two periods of PE, instead of one, in a 12-month period
- Verbal consent/telephonic signatures – due to the public health emergency, a patient’s signature is not required, and providers can obtain verbal consent and telephonic signatures. To accept a telephonic signature, these steps must be followed:
 - Read the consent language, “By signing, I declare that what I say below is true and correct” aloud to the individual/authorized representative as it is stated on the signature page of the HPE application:
 - I have read and understood this HPE Medi-Cal application.
 - The information I provided is true, correct, and complete.
 - I understand that I must complete and submit the insurance affordability application by the end of my presumptive eligibility period in order to be eligible for continued coverage.
 - I have received the insurance affordability application.
 - In addition:
 - Ask that the individual/authorized representative verbally acknowledge their consent.
 - In the signature line, type “Verbal consent – COVID-19.”
 - Be sure to document and keep documentation for all verbal consent obtained.

Who is eligible for the COVID-19 -PE Program?

The program is available to individuals with no insurance or who currently have private insurance that does not cover diagnostic testing, testing-related services, and treatment services — including all medically necessary care as a result of COVID-19 — and who are California residents.

Is a Social Security Number required to apply for the COVID-19 PE Program?

No.

Will individuals be asked about citizenship on their HPE or COVID-19 PE application?

No.

How long will an individual be covered by the COVID-19 PE Program?

An individual’s eligibility period will end on the last calendar day of the month in which the 60th day falls from the date of their PE application. **For example**, if an individual is determined eligible for HPE on July 3, 2015, PE coverage ends on August 31, 2015.

Is COVID-19 PE available for patients who are underinsured?

Yes. This information is obtained from the applicant at the time they are applying under COVID-19 PE and is based on the self-attestation of the individual.

Are the HPE and COVID-19 PE programs considered part of Public Charge?

No.

Can enrollment into HPE or COVID-19 PE be retrospectively applied?

No.

Payment

What is the COVID-19 PE reimbursement rate for providers?

Providers are paid up to the fee-for-service (FFS) rate and must be enrolled in the FFS program, not in a managed care plan.

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If an individual is in full-scope, limited scope Medi-Cal or HPE, what COVID-19 testing and treatment services can providers claim for reimbursement?

All COVID-19 testing, related testing, and treatment services are deemed to be emergency services for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries, regardless of scope of coverage.

Are digital signatures allowed for temporary authorization requests?

Yes.

Do either the HPE or COVID-19 PE Program provide coverage for repatriation of individuals back to their home county if transferred out of county?

Yes.

**For additional information on presumptive eligibility for COVID-19,
see DHCS' [step-by-step guide](#).**