

ALLIANCE for CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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Transition Age Youth Resource:
Accessing Medi-Cal Benefits for Former Foster Youth

What is Medi-Cal and who gets it?

Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, is a public insurance health care program that provides health care and mental health care services for low-income individuals and families who meet defined eligibility requirements. All children and youth in foster care are entitled to Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal with no share of cost and no income or resource limits. Young adults who were in foster care at age 18 or older may be eligible for) Medi-Cal Program for Former Foster Youth (FFY) until age 26 regardless of income eligibility.

Are all former foster youth eligible for the FFY Program? What if I am not eligible for the FFY Program?

To be eligible for Former Foster Youth (FFY) Medi-Cal until age 26, regardless of income, you must have had an open foster care case on your 18th birthday. If you did not have an open foster care case at age 18, you may still be eligible for Medi-Cal, but you will need to apply with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). You can apply online at benefitscal.com or in-person at your local DPSS office.

I am a former foster youth between the ages of 18-21 and my Medi-Cal is not working, what should I do?

If your case closed at age 18 or older, contact the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Former Foster Youth Program at (626) 312-6131. If your case closed before age 18, contact your DPSS Medi-Cal eligibility worker or the Alliance for Children's Rights.

What benefits does Medi-Cal offer?

Medi-Cal provides a range of health benefits, including:

- Outpatient (ambulatory) services
- Emergency services
- Hospitalization
- Maternity and newborn care
- Mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment
- Prescription drugs
- Physical and occupational therapy (rehabilitative and habilitative services)
- Laboratory services
- Preventive and wellness services, chronic disease management
- Vision (routine eye exam and glasses every 24 months)
- Children's services, including oral and vision care

The Medi-Cal Dental Program provides free dental services to children and adults who receive Medi-Cal. Services covered by Medi-Cal Dental include:

- Diagnostic and preventive dental hygiene (e.g., exams, x-rays, and teeth cleanings, molar sealants)
- Orthodontics for children who qualify
- Tooth extractions
- Sedation for dental services
- Fillings and crowns
- Root canal treatments (anterior/posterior)
- Scaling and root planing
- Complete and partial dentures

To find a dentist in your area that accepts Medi-Cal, visit **smilecalifornia.org** and enter your zip code.

Why do I need health care coverage?

Even if you are healthy, sometimes you may not predict a serious illness or accidental injury, so it is better to be protected than risk ending up needing health care and not having Medi-Cal to cover the expenses.

How do I know if I'm eligible for Medi-Cal?
Youth residing in California who were in foster care on their 18th birthday are eligible for Medi-Cal coverage up to the age of 26 regardless of income. California provides this coverage to youth whether they were in foster care in California or any other state or tribe. Former foster youth will not have to provide information about their income in order to qualify. Once the county knows your age and you indicate that you were in foster care at age 18, the county will enroll you in Medi-Cal and then verify your foster care status.

I am in foster care now. Do I need to reapply for Medi-Cal when I leave foster care?
If you leave foster care at the age of 18 or older, you do not need to reapply for Medi-Cal. You will be automatically moved into the Former Foster Youth (FFY) Medi-Cal program when you leave care and will stay covered until age 26. You can continue to use the same Medi-Cal card (called a Benefits Identification Card or BIC) that you had while in foster care. If you have lost or cannot find your card, you can ask the county to give you a new one.

If you have any issues with your Former Foster Youth (FFY) Medi-Cal eligibility, contact the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Former Foster Youth Program at (626) 312-6131.

Do I need a new Medi-Cal card after I leave foster care?
After you leave foster care, you can still use the same Medi-Cal card (called a Benefits Identification Card or BIC) you had while in foster care. If you can't find your card, you can call the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Former Foster Youth program at (626) 312-6131.

How do I apply for Medi-Cal coverage if I am not eligible for Former Foster Youth Medi-Cal?
You can apply for Medi-Cal coverage any time of the year. Youth who are not already enrolled can apply through BenefitsCal.com or by visiting their local DPSS office.

If my Medi-Cal application is approved, how do I choose my Medi-Cal coverage?
There are two types of Medi-Cal coverage: fee-for-service and managed care. With fee-for-service Medi-Cal coverage, you do not have to sign up for a health plan. This means you will need to find providers who accept fee-for-service Medi-Cal. With managed care Medi-Cal coverage, you choose a health plan and see providers, including specialists, who are in your health plan's network.

Managed Care Medi-Cal offers additional benefits like Enhanced Care Management (ECM) and Community Supports (CS). These benefits can include case management, housing navigation, and medical transportation, among others. To learn more about these additional benefits, visit the Department of Health Care Services website.

Do my children automatically qualify for Medi-Cal coverage because I am a former foster youth?

Depending on your income, your child is likely eligible for Medi-Cal. We recommend you apply online at benefitscal.com or in-person at your local DPSS office.

How to Ask for Help Accessing Medi-Cal Benefits

If you have called the DPSS Former Foster Youth Medi-Cal program at (626) 312-6131, and you continue to have problems, please contact the Alliance for Children's Rights.