

New Law Expands Transportation Services for Medi-Cal Members

By Hilary Moise, Staff Attorney, Legal Services of Northern California

What the Law Says:

The new law took effect on July 1, 2017. Free transportation is now a required benefit for all Medi-Cal managed care plans (such as Anthem Blue Cross, Health Net, Molina, and Partnership). The transportation services are available for anyone who cannot reasonably get themselves to the doctor, or who cannot travel by themselves. For example, if you do not have a working car or if you have to go to a doctor located in another city and have no one who can drive you, you can get a ride. Payment for gas money is also available, per mile.

What Transportation Services Are Available:

You can get transportation to go to or from any doctor, dentist, or mental health care appointment, to pick up prescriptions, or to pick up durable medical equipment. The kind of transportation service you get is up to your health plan. It can include a taxi or ride service like Lyft, public transportation like the bus, or mileage reimbursement if you ask someone you know to drive you. Wheelchair vans, gurney vans, and ambulances are available for members with special health needs. The transportation benefit includes the costs for one person to go with you, such as a parent, spouse, or friend.

How to Request Transportation Services:

If you are a member of a Medi-Cal managed care plan, call the member services department for your plan. Ask for transportation services and then you will be asked about your transportation needs. Once you are authorized by your plan, you will need to call the plan a few days before each appointment to schedule your ride. Ask your plan to tell you the policy for ride requests. Or, if you are authorized for mileage reimbursement, you will need to get a form from your plan to fill out for each trip. The authorization will last for 12 months.

If you are not a member of a Medi-Cal managed care plan, and have Fee-For-Service or “straight Medi-Cal,” then you can contact your county Medi-Cal office for information on Medi-Cal transportation services in your area. Legal Services of Northern California has information on how the transportation benefit works in different counties, and what to do if there are no transportation services in your area.

About Legal Services of Northern California:

We are a nonprofit law firm offering free legal aid and advice in 23 counties, plus 9 additional counties for our Health Rights Project. You can call and speak to a lawyer about housing or public benefits issues by calling (916) 551-2150. For health-related legal matters, call 888-354-4474. Interpreters are available for any language. For some services there is an income test to qualify. Our website has useful self-help information: <http://www.lsnc.net>.

We serve the following counties: Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Inyo, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Ventura, Yolo, and Yuba.