

EDI Corner: Key Medi-Cal Updates for Pediatricians

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2026 is now well underway and so are several significant changes to Medi-Cal insurance benefits that a majority of our pediatric patients and their families have relied on. Although to some, Medicine and Politics do not seemingly have overlapping similarities in expertise, decision-making, and scope. The ever-changing federal budget changes directly affect how we perform our jobs as pediatricians.

In California specifically, the new year brought changes that the state public insurance system has not experienced in decades. Our state has long been regarded nationally as a safe place for families of all ethnic, racial, and sociodemographic backgrounds. However, even our state will have to make difficult budget decisions based on the policies passed in Washington DC. This policy, called H.R.1 formally and “The Big Beautiful Bill” publicly, cuts funding to Medi-Cal by hundreds of millions of dollars¹ which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable families in California. This loss of funding is executed in various ways that healthcare and social services can be administered. Here are some key changes to consider for your practice:

- Medi-Cal Enrollment²
 - Assets will now be included in an individual’s determination for enrollment
 - Those 19 years and old without legal citizenship status are no longer eligible

- Pediatrics
 - Medi-Cal reimbursement rates are projected to change, though figures remain unknown
 - Retroactive reimbursements are expected to stop

- Pharmacy
 - An expansion to the list of medications needing prior authorization
 - COVID19 tests will require a prescription

- CalFresh
 - Work requirements will be implemented in order to meet eligibility
 - Those without legal citizenship status or pending citizenship status are no longer eligible

Though this is by no means an inclusive list of all of the changes coming to Medi-Cal, the impact to families can be seen across multiple services and programs. Most striking is that while many policy makers will assert that care for children will always be a priority, even policies directed only at adults will inevitably change how a guardian is able to provide for a household. As Pediatricians we understand that if a guardian’s physical, mental, and social needs are not met, these same needs are likely to be compromised for their children.

To help guide families through these changes, there are simple, easy-to-follow sites that can help determine if and/or how their benefits will change. While changes may continue to come to one of our state’s best resources, we can work to remain a constant source of guidance for those we care for. Check them out on the next page.

Patient Resources:

- [Survey of Eligibility - Immigrant Focus](#)
- [MediCal official page for patient coverage](#)

References:

- 1) “How Massive Federal Cuts Will Create Unprecedented Challenges for Medi-Cal Patients and Providers” Dawn Joyce. California Health Care Foundation. 3 Oct 2025.
https://www.chcf.org/resource/how-massive-federal-cuts-will-create-unprecedented-challenges-medi-cal-patients-providers/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- 2) “What Medi-Cal Members Need to Know”. Department of Health Care Services. 2026.
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Medi-Cal/Pages/changes.aspx?utm_source=chatgpt.com