



CALIFORNIA BUDGET PROJECT

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## **New Medicaid Documentation Requirement Could Create a Barrier to Health Care Starting July 1, US Citizens Must Prove They Are Citizens**

SACRAMENTO – Beginning July 1, a new federal law requires US citizens who receive health coverage through the Medicaid Program - Medi-Cal in California - to provide proof that they are citizens. Many Medi-Cal recipients - those in nursing homes, with physical or mental disabilities, from rural areas, or those who were not born in a hospital - may not have the documents necessary to demonstrate their citizenship. A current proposal by the state Department of Health Services goes a step further than federal law, and would deny Medi-Cal eligibility to citizens who are unable to meet this requirement.

A new California Budget Project *Budget Brief*, "New Medicaid Documentation Requirement Could Create a Barrier to Health Care," outlines options to reduce the negative impacts of this requirement on the estimated 8 million Californians enrolled in Medi-Cal this year.

"California should ensure that, while complying with federal law, we don't put paperwork in the way of a citizen's continuing health care coverage," said Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project, a nonpartisan public policy research group. "Citizens who lost birth certificates in a natural disaster, or who weren't born in a hospital and did not receive a birth certificate, could potentially lose their health care because they do not have a piece of paper."

The *Brief* recommends that the documentation requirement not be a condition for Medi-Cal eligibility. Although the new federal law requires that states implement the requirement to receive federal matching funds, it does not make the documentation a condition of eligibility for receiving health coverage. The state's proposal would deny Medi-Cal eligibility to citizens who are unable to meet the new requirement.

In addition, the *Brief* recommends that the state and counties conduct an aggressive outreach campaign to inform Medi-Cal applicants and beneficiaries about the new requirement. It also recommends having the state pay to obtain birth certificates, passports, or other needed documents; using electronic "data matches" with state vital records and other data files to establish citizenship; and reviewing files in counties' possession to determine whether they already have sufficient information to satisfy the new requirement.

This new federal requirement does not apply to non-citizens who receive Medicaid, because these individuals are already subject to a separate, substantial documentation requirement.

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“There should be an outreach campaign to make sure that US citizens are fully aware that they need to show copies of birth certificates, passports, or citizenship papers, as well as to clarify to non-citizens that they are *not* subject to this new requirement,” said David Carroll, research director of the CBP and author of the *Brief*.

Congress enacted this new documentation requirement despite a recent federal report that found no substantial evidence that undocumented immigrants claim to be citizens in order to qualify for Medicaid.

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*The California Budget Project (CBP) was founded in 1994 to provide Californians with a source of timely, objective, and accessible expertise on state fiscal and economic policy issues. The CBP engages in independent fiscal and policy analysis and public education with the goal of improving public policies affecting the economic and social well-being of low- and middle-income Californians. General operating support for the CBP is provided by foundation grants, individual donations, and subscriptions. Please visit the CBP's web site at [www.cbp.org](http://www.cbp.org).*