

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency Department of Health Care Services



County Readiness Toolkit

Once the continuous coverage requirements ends, counties will have 12-months to initiate annual renewal activities, with an additional two months to complete the annual renewal processing, for a total of 14 months to conduct redeterminations on all Medi-Cal beneficiaries and return to normal business operations. Providing resources and support tools for the counties to help prepare for the end of the continuous coverage requirement is vital to the success of the Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) unwinding efforts. The County Readiness Toolkit is designed to help counties assess readiness in the three key areas of high impact:

- 1. Organization and Staffing
- 2. Staff Training for All Levels of Staff who Perform or Supervise Medi-Cal Related Case Activities
- 3. Lobby Management, Call Center, and Outreach

The purpose of the County Readiness Toolkit is to assist counties in preparation for the continuous coverage unwinding and resumption to normal Medi-Cal operations through the development of a County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan. The contents of the toolkit include:

- County Readiness Checklist Attachment 1
 - A checklist of items DHCS recommends Counties to complete prior to the end of the continuous coverage requirement.
- County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan Template Attachment 2
 - This template is designed to highlight the areas of work counties may need to address in their planning efforts. Counties are required to use this template to develop their Readiness Plan. Counties must email their Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan to <u>Theresa.Hasbrouck@dhcs.ca.gov</u> and <u>Kathryn.Floto@dhcs.ca.gov</u> no later than February 21st, 2023.
- County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan Recommended Strategies – Attachment 3
 - This guide is intended to assist counties in completing Section 1 of the *County Continuous Coverage Readiness Unwinding Plan Template.*



County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Checklist

Below is a checklist of items the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) recommends counties complete prior to the end of the continuous coverage requirement. DHCS has provided resources under each item to assist with assessing operational readiness.

- Become a DHCS Coverage Ambassador
- Read the DHCS <u>Medi-Cal Continuous Coverage Operational Unwinding Plan</u> and identify areas of the plan that impact county business operations.
- Read DHCS All County Welfare Director Letters (ACWDL) and Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letters (MEDIL) related to the unwinding of the continuous coverage requirement expiration. Section 3 of the *County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan Template* provides the full list of published letters related to the unwinding of the continuous coverage requirement.
 - a. <u>ACWDL 22-09</u> Updated Guidance on the County Process When Mail is Returned Undeliverable
 - b. <u>ACWDL 22-13</u> Changes to Asset Verification Review Requirements Due to July 2022 Asset Limit Increase
 - c. <u>ACWDL 22-18</u> Case Processing After the COVID-19 PHE Concludes
 - d. ACWDL Reasonable Explanation
 - e. <u>ACWDL 22-17</u> Increase to the Reasonable Compatibility Threshold in the California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System (CalHEERS)
 - f. <u>MEDIL 22-01</u> Federal COVID-19 PHE Additional Contact Requirement
 - g. <u>MEDIL 22-20</u> Updates Regarding the Approval of Temporary Waiver Requests as a Result of the Covid-19 PHE
- Watch recorded DHCS Trainings that are uploaded to the <u>DHCS Secure File Transfer Protocol</u> (SFTP). Note: Log in credentials required.
 - a. Renewal Refresher
 - b. Income Refresh Trainings
 - c. Resumption of Normal Business Practices during Continuous Coverage (previously referred to as PHE) Unwinding
 - d. Processing Undeliverable Mail
 - e. Property Refresher
 - f. Senate Bill (SB) 260 Streamlining Transitions to Covered California
- □ Complete the County Readiness Plan Template
 - County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Plan Template (Submission to DHCS Required)
 - b. County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Plan Recommended Strategies
- Attend the DHCS Support Calls that will begin 60 days prior to the end of the continuous coverage requirement.



County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Plan Template

The federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) <u>declared a Public Health Emergency</u> (PHE) in January of 2020 in response to the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Special rules were put in place during the COVID-19 PHE to allow more people to obtain and keep Medi-Cal benefits through a continuous coverage requirement. Prior to the continuous coverage requirement, Medi-Cal cases were reviewed on an annual basis by counties to determine program eligibility for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. On December 29, President Biden signed into law the <u>Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023</u> (the omnibus spending bill). With the passage of this bill, the continuous coverage requirements that paused all Medi-Cal redeterminations since March 2020 would be decoupled from the PHE termination date as of April 1, 2023, setting the stage for the resumption of Medi-Cal redeterminations. With the passage of this Act, the continuous coverage requirement will end on March 31, 2023. During the Continuous Coverage Unwinding, counties will need to conduct a full redetermination for all beneficiaries who would have otherwise been subject to redetermination due to the halting of certain case actions. This template is intended to highlight the areas of work counties may need to address in their planning efforts. Counties are required to complete and submit this template to validate their readiness to complete continuous coverage unwinding actions and resume normal operations. Counties must email their Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan to <u>Theresa.Hasbrouck@dhcs.ca.gov</u> and <u>Kathryn.Floto@dhcs.ca.gov</u> no later than **February 21st, 2023**. DHCS approval is not required for counties to move forward with their continuous coverage unwinding plans.

This template consists of three sections:

Section 1: Readiness Assessment

Guided questions for counties to assess their readiness for completing continuous coverage requirement unwinding actions when the continuous enrollment requirement ends, highlighting areas of potential risk for potential coverage loss and/or delayed case processing.

Section 2: County Planning Approach and Strategies

Prompts to assist with county planning, organization, and structure; identify the staging and timing of activities for completing unwinding actions when the continuous coverage requirement ends; and anticipate potential risks and determine mitigation strategies for completing continuous coverage requirement unwinding actions as planned.

Section 3: Guidance and Resources

DHCS has published and compiled several resources to provide additional support to counties as they prepare to resume normal operations.



Section 1: Readiness Assessment

These are guided questions for counties to assess their readiness for completing continuous coverage requirement unwinding actions. The purpose of this section is to highlight areas of risk for coverage loss and/or delayed continuous coverage requirement unwinding processes. The **County Reponses** in **Section 1** will be used to prepare an action plan in **Section 2**. Items that are *italicized in grey* are examples of county responses.

1.1 Organization and Staffing

Describe how the county intends to organize themselves to prepare for continuous coverage requirement unwinding actions and resuming normal operations in the table labeled "Narrative Summary".

Narrative Summary

Sacramento County started Workgroup meetings.

The county began assessing and developing trainings.

The county will use internal database systems including CalWIN and different reports as Tracking tools.

The county will use available resources from Policy, Staff Development and Operations as our evaluation methods.

The county will collaborate with Stakeholders and Community-Based Organizations during meetings.

Navigators will begin their outreach to inform our communities of DHCS' Communication Phase 1.

Enter **Staffing Areas** prominent to the county along with the **Point of Contact** and **Staffing Plan(s)** that will establish strategies for resolving pending continuous coverage requirement unwinding actions and resuming normal operations.

Staffing Area	Point of Contact Identified	Staffing Plan(s) Identified
Case Managers – Initial Intake	\boxtimes	\boxtimes
Case Managers – Case Maintenance	\boxtimes	\boxtimes
Mail Processing (Returned or Undeliverable)	\boxtimes	\boxtimes
Staff Training	\boxtimes	\boxtimes
Call Centers	\boxtimes	\boxtimes
Fair Hearings Staff	\boxtimes	\boxtimes



1.1 Organization and Staffing Continued

These are guided questions for counties to assess availability of County Workforce dedicated to Medi-Cal eligibility operations. Examples of County Responses are *italicized in grey*.

County Assessment of Available Medi-Cal Specific Workers	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
Has the county read the <u>DHCS Continuous Coverage</u> <u>Unwinding Operational Plan</u> ?	Yes	No
Has the county reviewed the Continuous Coverage Unwinding Flow Charts released in <u>MEDIL I 22-28</u> ?	Yes	No
Did the county complete any case processing actions while the continuous coverage requirement was in place?	Yes Sacramento County took action on cases that did not result in a negative action to our customers. Cases were reevaluated if it was a benefit to the customer.	No
Are changes needed in how the county tracks annual renewals received and assigns for processing?	No	No
Does the county receive renewals and changes in circumstances in other pathways other than through mail, telephonically, in-person, online, or through fax/email?	No	No
Has the county read the Updated Guidance on the County Process When Mail is Returned Undeliverable released in <u>ACWDL 22-09</u> ?	Yes	No
Does the county have to make changes to exisiting business processes for returned/undeliverable mail due to the continuous coverage requirement ending?	No	Yes



County Assessment of Available Medi-Cal Specific Workers	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
	DHA currently updates all addresses when we receive a mail notification from USPS.	
Has the county utilized mailing addresses from the Post Office for returned/undeliverable mail?	Yes If we receive notification on an address change from USPS, we update the information and case comment where the information was received from.	Yes
Are there business processes that can be enhanced based on the guidance provided in <u>ACWDL 22-18</u> ?	Yes Our department's procedure on Craig vs Bonta has been revised to reflect that a positive change in circumstances needs a full redetermination.	No
Were changes made to existing business processes for fair hearings in order to accommodate the potential influx in state hearing requests?	No	No

1.2 Staff Training

These are guided questions for counties to assess staff training needs. Examples of County Responses are *italicized in grey*.

County Self-Assessment Questions	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
Do existing county eligibility staff need to attend Medi-Cal Training courses in preparation for the continuous coverage unwinding actions?	Yes	No



County Self-Assessment Questions	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
Has the county developed a training plan for county staff related to continuous coverage unwinding activities?	 Yes The county is taking a three-part approach to include: Policy refresher and overview of the continuous coverage lift Training on the components of completing a renewal in the SAWS system and applying the correct policy regulation Unit level training and reviews Training will start in early March. 	No
Does the county office have the capacity to allow staff to attend Medi-Cal Training courses?	Yes	No
Has the county modified onboarding training for new staff to incorporate the continuous coverage unwinding?	Yes	No
Has the county watched all DHCS Continuous Coverage Unwinding training sessions?	Yes	No
Does the county have a plan to update guidance/handbooks for the unwinding of the continuous coverage requirement?	Yes	No
Does the county anticipate any challenges with county eligibility workers applying normal business processes for a beneficiaries whose post-continuous coverage requirement expiration redetermination has been completed?	Yes Staff hired during the waiver period were trained on redeterminations; however, they did not have the opportunity to apply their training to	No



County Self-Assessment Questions	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
	live cases. Targeted training and case reviews will be needed. They are in development.	
	Additional challenges are the impacts to current operations. The majority of Sacramento's eligibility staff are assigned to work multiple programs, such as Medi-Cal and CalFresh, thus they will not be available to serve customers while attending this additional training. Overall there is an impact on our service delivery for all programs.	
Are there potential challenges the county anticipates with resuming normal case processing for beneficiaries whose post- continuous coverage requirement expiration	Yes As previously stated, the challenges	No
redetermination has been completed?	will be to maintain service delivery with competing program changes and CalSAWS migration.	
Are changes needed for the county review process to ensure Medi-Cal eligibility is determined accurately and	No	No
timely during the continuous coverage unwind period?	Our county review guides are current and up to date.	



1.3 Lobby Management, Call Center, and Outreach

These are guided questions for counties to assess their lobby and call center readiness and beneficiary outreach efforts. Examples of County Responses are *italicized in grey*.

County Self-Assessment Questions	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
Has the county assessed additional staffing and/or technology needs for in-person lobby traffic during the continuous coverage unwinding?	Yes	No
Has the county considered the potential for new or different in-person assistance required in lobbies?	No Our current business model provides in-person assistance for all programs.	No
Has the county discussed best practices during the County Welfare Directors Association's (CWDA) Regional Meetings?	Yes	No
Does the county have a plan to make new or altered materials available for applicants/beneficiaries during the continuous coverage unwinding?	Yes Sacramento will be utilizing the	No
Potential printed resources: applications, forms, flyer, and information from community partners that provide services to underserved communities.	publications that were provided by DHCS.	
Has the county assessed potential increased call volume due to the continuous coverage unwinding and developed a plan to increase staffing, lower wait times, ensure coverage for high-volume times, etc.?	Yes Our phone queues are monitored on a daily basis and staffing resources are reallocated during high call volumes.	No



County Self-Assessment Questions	County Response	County Request for DHCS Technical Assistance (TA)
Has the county collaborated with other counties on how to lower call volumes or wait times?	Yes We are assessing strategies we might implement.	No
Does the county have <u>DHCS Coverage Ambassador</u> (s)?	Yes	No
Has the county reviewed resources provided on the DHCS website <u>Planning For the End of the Continuous Coverage</u> <u>Requirement</u> ?	Yes	No
Has the county informed community partners about the county's continuous coverage unwinding plan?	Yes	No
Can the county utilize the customizable fliers and social media graphics provided in the <u>Medi-Cal Continuous</u> <u>Coverage Communication Toolkit</u> Phase 1.0?	Yes	No



Section 2: Assessment and Approach

Considering the answers from Section 1.1-1.3, fill out the templates below for Sections 2.1 – 2.3. Examples are *italicized in grey*.

2.1 Organization and Staffing

As	sessment		Approach	
Readiness Area	Assessment	Proposed Approach	Other considerations	Target Completion Date
Eligibility staff	Current staffing levels assigned to continuous case maintenance may not be adequate.	Sacramento conducted an analysis on the potential amount of renewals for the month of June 2023, and will track how many cases will trigger a renewal for future months. Resources will be redirected when feasible and overtime will be available.	Staff hired after 03/2020 may need additional ongoing support as they become familiarized with the renewal process.	On-going



2.2 Staff Training

As	sessment		Approach	
Readiness Area	Assessment	Proposed Approach	Other considerations	Target Completion Date
Service Center and non-Service Center offices	Sacramento County determined that all eligibility staff need a refresher training on processing renewals.	 The county is taking a three-part approach to address training needs to include the following: Policy refresher and overview of the continuous coverage lift. Training on the components of completing a renewal in the SAWS system and applying the correct policy regulation. Unit level training and reviews. 	Existing training material needs to be slightly modified to address latest state ACWDL's and MEIDL's.	April 2023



2.3 Lobby Management, Call Center, and Outreach

As	sessment		Approach	
Readiness Area	Assessment	Proposed Approach	Other considerations	Target Completion Date
All methods of application (online, phone, in-person, etc.)	Sacramento County's current delivery service model provides flexibility to meet our customers' needs.	Continue with our current business model.	Continue ongoing assessment	On-going

Section 3: Guidance and Resources

DHCS has released multiple guidance letters throughout the duration of the COVID-19 PHE in order to assist counties with frequently asked questions, policy changes, policy clarifications and other useful information. The guidance can be found at the following links:

Letter	Date	Title
MEDIL I 22-48	November 22, 2022	Instructions for the Request for Additional Income Information For medi-Cal Form to Obtain a Reasonable Explanation
<u>MEDIL I 22-45</u>	November 09, 2022	Updates Regarding The Processing Of Returned Mail With In-State Forwarding Address
<u>MEDIL I 22-43</u>	November 01, 2022	COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Unwinding Period: Adding a Person to an Existing Case
ACWDL 22-23	October 17, 2022	American Rescue Plan Act Postpartum Care Extension
MEDIL I 22-33	August 26, 2022	County Readiness Toolkit for the Preparation of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency (PHE) Unwinding and Resumption of Normal Medi-Cal Operations
MEDIL I 22-34	August 22, 2022	COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) Unwinding for Individuals who Aged out of the Young Adult Expansion during the PHE
ACWDL 22-22	August 8, 2022	Introduction of Reasonable Explanation for Medi-Cal Determinations
MEDIL I 22-28	July 11, 2022	COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) Unwinding Flow Charts



ACWDL 22-18	June 24, 2022	Case Processing Actions after the Conclusion of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency (PHE)
MEDIL I 22-20E	June 24, 2022	Errata to the Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter NO. I 22-20 for Updates Regarding the Approval of Temporary Waiver Requests as a result of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
ACWDL 22-17	June 17, 2022	Increase to the Reasonable Compatibility Threshold in the California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System (CalHEERS)
MEDIL I 22-19	May 13, 2022	The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Uninsured Group Program Continues to Process COVID-19 Testing, Testing-related, Vaccination and Treatment Claims
ACWDL 22-13	May 12, 2022	Changes to Asset Verification Review Requirements Due to July 2022 Asset Limit Increase
ACWDL 22-09	March 17, 2022	Updated Guidance on the County Process When Mail is Returned Undeliverable
ACWDL 22-04	February 11, 2022	Treatment of Certain Public Health Emergency Assistance Payments for Medi-Cal Eligibility
MEDIL I 22-01	January 14, 2022	Federal Covid-19 Public Health Emergency Additional Contact Requirement
MEDIL 21-39	November 23, 2021	Global Outreach Language Translations
MEDIL 21-21	September 20, 2021	COVID-19 Global Outreach Language
ACWDL 21-16	September 14, 2021	Case Processing Actions Allowed during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency (PHE)
MEDIL I 21-09	June 24, 2021	Continuing Telephonic Flexibilities for the Minor Consent Program beyond the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
ACWDL 21-10	May 18, 2021	Provisions from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
MEDIL I 21-04	March 4, 2021	Additional and Updated Frequently Asked Questions due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
MEDIL 1 20-20E	February 22, 2021	Extend Eligibility for Refugee Medical Assistance Applicants and Beneficiaries Due to the Covid- 19 Public Health Emergency Errata



ACWDL 21-03	February 17, 2021	Provisions from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021
MEDIL I 20-37	December 7, 2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Uninsured Group Program
MEDIL I 20-30	October 5, 2020	Mixed Household Renewals Guidance During The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
MEDIL I 20-25	August 13, 2020	Updated Guidance Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Superseding MEDIL I 20-07 and MEDIL I 20-08
MEDIL I 20-20	July 30, 2020	Extend Eligibility for Refugee Medical Assistance Applicants and Beneficiaries Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
MEDIL I 20-14	May 29, 2020	Extension of Delaying Annual Redeterminations, Discontinuances, and Negative Actions Due to Covid-19 Public Health Emergency
MEDIL I 20-16	May 15, 2020	Companion to MEDIL I 20-12 - Applications Received Through SAWS Portal
MEDIL I 20-15	May 13, 2020	Prioritizing Case Processing Activities Through the Duration of the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency
ACWDL 20-09	April 27, 2020	Provisions from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
MEDIL I 20-12	April 27, 2020	Applications Received Without Applicant Signature
MEDIL I 20-11	April 23, 2020	Follow-up Guidance to MEDIL I 20-07 and I20-08 on Medi-Cal Inmate Eligibility Programs & Medi- Cal Beneficiaries Who Become Incarcerated
MEDIL I 20-08	April 10, 2020	Follow-up Guidance to MEDIL I 20-07
MEDIL I 20-07	March 16, 2020	Access to Care During Public Health Crisis or Disaster for Medi-Cal
MEDIL I 20-06	March 12, 2020	Public Health Crisis or Disaster Reminders for Medi-Cal
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County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Readiness Plan – Recommended Strategies

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) developed a list of recommended strategies to support the counties readiness assessment in the following three areas of high impact:

- 1. Organization and Staffing
- 2. Staff Training for All Levels of Staff who Perform or Supervise Medi-Cal Related Case Activities
- 3. Lobby Management, Call Center, and Outreach

These recommended strategies are intended to assist counties in completing **Section 1** of the *County Continuous Coverage Unwinding Plan Template.* DHCS encourages but does not require counties to leverage the strategies listed below.

Organization and Staffing

- Identify caseworkers for both initial intake applications and case maintenance activities to complete the Medi-Cal case work within the required timeframes.
- Evaluate if the county would benefit from creating a specialized task force for Medi-Cal continuous coverage related activities
- Assess current business processes and determine if changes are feasible to better support continuous coverage requirement unwinding casework.
- Develop additional county business processes that focus on supporting eligibility workers to perform casework activities accurately and timely. These processes may include:
 - Designating staff to track casework activities required under the continuous coverage requirement unwinding, and focus on the accuracy and timeliness of Medi-Cal continuous coverage related activities.
 - Monitoring all work efforts that negatively affect beneficiaries' Medi-Cal eligibility including monitoring and restoring any incorrect terminations of ineligible beneficiaries prior to a full redetermination and resolving eligibility discrepancies between the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) and Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS).
- Develop a communication method to inform line staff about continuous coverage unwinding.
- Update staff, training materials, and procedure manuals with any changes in policy that impact continuous coverage related activities.
- Review current business processes for updating changes to beneficiary contact information (i.e. undeliverable mail, lists received from managed care plans, reports made in online eligibility portals) to ensure that case records are updated timely, and the beneficiary receives notices of action.



Staff Training for All Levels of Staff who Perform or Supervise Medi-Cal Related Case Activities

- DHCS recommends requiring a minimum of 16-hours of refresher trainings that focus on activities required for performing Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and Non-MAGI redeterminations and case management. Counties should use the DHCS Continuous Coverage Unwinding Medi-Cal Refresher Training sessions as a basis to develop the 16-hours of required training but require the addition of county specific business processes to make the training meaningful to each county workforce.
- Watch recorded DHCS Trainings that are uploaded to the <u>DHCS Secure File Transfer Protocol</u> (SFTP). Note: Log in credentials required.

Lobby Management, Call Center, and Outreach

- Provide commonly requested Medi-Cal forms and printed resources for applicants/beneficiaries in county lobbies.
- Have designated staff to address in-person lobby traffic.
- Have designated staff to assist "drop in" beneficiaries.
- Considerations for enhancing lobby management, to the extent staffing/resources are available:
 - Staff lobby with eligibility workers and/or clerical staff to assist with lobby traffic.
 - Have designated eligibility workers to assist with case specific questions.
 - Rotation of eligibility workers and/or clerical staff in the county lobbies to monitor, screen, and when possible, assist individuals in line to expedite waiting times.
 Monitor kiesks in the lobby and assist sustamers with use
 - Monitor kiosks in the lobby and assist customers with use.
- Monitor Call Center call trends and consider available options to handle a potential increase in call volume, such as updating Interactive Voice Response (IVR) messaging to provide information on self-service options. Some examples may include:
 - Updating information on customer portals.
 - <u>MyBenefits CalWIN</u>
 - BenefitsCal
 - Referring to FAQ information on county or DHCS websites.
- Train call center representatives to address continuous coverage unwind related questions. Utilize <u>Call Script Snippets</u> provided in DHCS' Communication Toolkits.
- Develop a plan or update projected hold times for Call Center telephone calls.