
The Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program

Development Phase

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The State of California was awarded a Federal grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to support and establish a program to perform ombudsman services for Cal MediConnect. This program will be an important consumer protection for all Cal MediConnect enrollees, ensuring that individual issues can be addressed. These ombuds services will be available to Cal MediConnect enrollees in addition to existing appeals and grievances processes.

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) are working together to implement and establish the Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program that will be housed within DMHC. Its independence from DHCS during implementation is a critical element of its creation, ensuring that there is a third-party charged with assisting enrollees and providing feedback to DHCS on one of its programs.

The program will serve the following functions:

- Provide ombuds services to individuals enrolled in Cal MediConnect plans;
- Empower enrollees and their families;
- Investigate and resolve enrollee problems/complaints with Cal MediConnect plans;
- Monitor ombuds efforts and track problems, complaints and trends, and
- Share ombuds best practices with CMS and other Financial Alignment Initiative states.

The program is based on the existing model of the Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) administered by DMHC.

Development of the Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program

Cal MediConnect will begin no sooner than April 1, 2014. DHCS and DMHC plan to implement the Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program by the program start date.

The following sections briefly describe steps involved in developing the Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program.

Develop, Solicit, and Initiate Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program Contracts

DMHC and DHCS will jointly develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit and ultimately award one or more contracts to successful Ombudsman Service Providers (OSP) applicants for the provision of ombuds services.

DMHC will contract with independent, qualified OSPs who will support enrollees free of charge by: 1) empowering individuals with appropriate information and resources; 2) providing assistance with filing complaints and seeking resolutions; and 3) providing systems analysis and recommendations.

The OSPs will provide independent, local, person-centered, and linguistically and culturally competent consumer assistance to enrollees and their families or other representatives.

Development of Reporting System

DHCS, DMHC and CMS will work to develop a reporting system to monitor Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program services, performance, and outcomes. The development of this reporting system will be part of the DHCS larger effort of developing a tracking and reporting system for consumer inquiries and grievances specific to Cal MediConnect.

The reporting system under the Cal MediConnect Ombuds Program will collect and report data to assist DHCS and CMS in monitoring the effectiveness of the Cal MediConnect program and health services delivered by the managed care plans

All collection and reporting functions will protect confidential beneficiary information.

Training

To ensure that Ombuds Service Providers receive up front and on-going support to provide effective and accessible assistance to Cal MediConnect beneficiaries, DHCS will develop additional training and educational resources that focus on the unique issues faced by dually eligible beneficiaries.