

COVERED 26



Former foster youth are eligible for free health care under the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires states to provide youth under 26 with free health care if they were in foster care at age 18. This ensures that former foster youth can access the health care services they need – just like non-foster youth who can stay on their parents' insurance plans until 26. Children Now is spearheading a statewide outreach campaign to ensure all former foster youth living in California know they are eligible for free Medi-Cal coverage until age 26.

Former foster youth qualify for free Medi-Cal coverage if they:

- Were in foster care in ANY state at age 18,
- Currently live in California, AND
- Are under the age of 26.

Youth are eligible regardless of income.

Are youth required to bring proof that they were in foster care at age 18 when they go to sign up?

NO. But former foster youth must answer "YES" when asked if they were in foster care at age 18. Those who self-identify as former foster youth will automatically be enrolled in Medi-Cal and assigned a "4M" aid code so that they don't have to re-enroll every year. A youth can access free health care services while the county verifies that he or she was in foster care in California OR any other state at age 18.

4 reasons former foster youth should sign up for Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth:

- 1 No Income Requirements.**
Former foster youth qualify for free coverage until 26 regardless of how much money they earn, eliminating the need to answer income questions when they go to sign up.
- 2 Simplified Renewal Process.**
Once enrolled in the Medi-Cal for former foster youth program, youth stay covered until 26 with no need to reapply each year.
- 3 Flexibility.**
Youth enrolled in the Medi-Cal for former foster youth program qualify for fee-for-service coverage, which means they can go to any doctor, clinic, therapist or hospital that takes Medi-Cal. Fee-for-service Medi-Cal allows former foster youth to access care from a Medi-Cal provider wherever they need it. This is critical given this population's high mobility.
- 4 Comprehensive Coverage.**
The Medi-Cal program for former foster youth includes medical, vision (i.e. eye exams), dental (starting May 2014), substance abuse treatment, and mental health coverage.

Youth who sign up for the free Medi-Cal program for former foster youth will be assigned the 4M aid code, allowing them to receive all the benefits listed above until they turn 26.

What if youth need help finding out if they were in foster care at age 18 or have trouble enrolling?

Youth can contact the Foster Care Ombudsman at **1-877-846-1602** or fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov for help. Some youth may not realize they were in foster care at age 18 because, for example, they lived with relatives, left their placement without approval, or were placed in probation-supervised foster care as a result of a juvenile delinquency case. The Foster Care Ombudsman can check whether a youth was in foster care at age 18 and serve as a resource for any youth having difficulty enrolling.

When can youth start to sign up for Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth?

Former foster youth under 26 can sign up for this coverage starting **January 1, 2014**.

Youth already enrolled in Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth on or after July 1, 2013, should remain covered until age 26 with no new application needed. Previously, these youth would have lost coverage at age 21.

How can my organization help?

- Tell former foster youth about the benefits of the Medi-Cal for former foster youth program.
- When providing enrollment assistance to youth under the age of 26, be sure to ask if they were in foster care at age 18 and tell them that former foster youth qualify for free Medi-Cal coverage until 26 regardless of income.
- Encourage youth to contact the Foster Care Ombudsman at **1-877-846-1602** or fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov if they have trouble enrolling or are not sure if they qualify for this coverage.

Here's how Children Now can help support your outreach efforts:

www.coveredtil26.org:

Visit our youth-friendly website for information and outreach materials. Children Now will update this site with tips on how and where youth can enroll in free Medi-Cal coverage as more information becomes available.

Trainings and Presentations:

For training support or for presentations about Medi-Cal for former foster youth, contact Fatima Morales at fmorales@childrennow.org, or Jessica Haspel at jhaspel@childrennow.org.

