

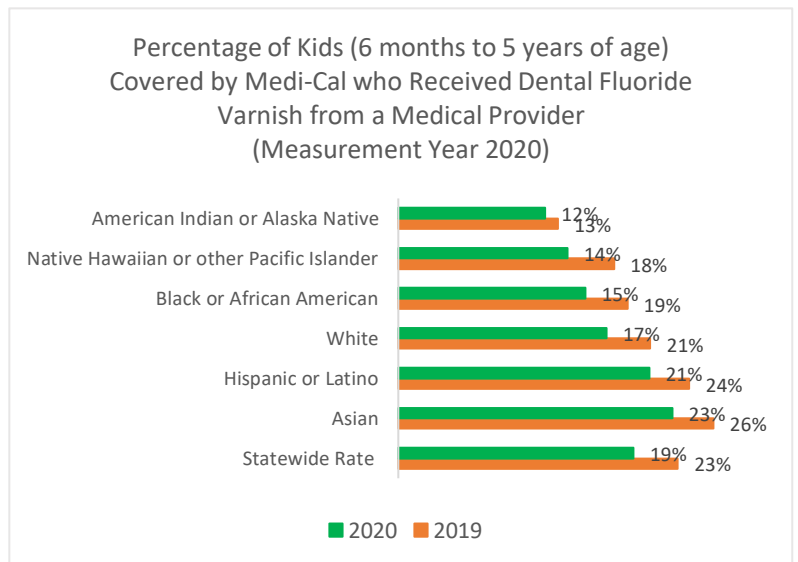
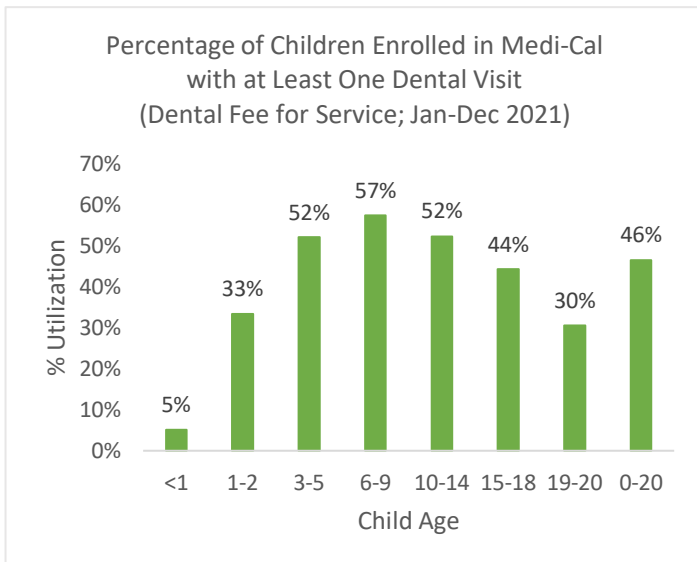
Leveraging Medi-Cal Innovation to Promote Children’s Oral Health: A Toolkit for Local Oral Health Programs

Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs) are critical to promoting children’s oral health. The California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative and new Medi-Cal benefits available to children and families present new opportunities for MCPs, local oral health programs (LOHPs), community-based organizations (CBOs), schools, and local First 5s to build and strengthen relationships that promote optimal oral health for California’s children and youth.

BACKGROUND

Less than half (46%) of children and youth covered by Medi-Cal receive any dental care, and very young children are least likely to receive care (see charts below).¹

Moreover, state data shows that very few young children and children of color receive fluoride varnish application in the medical or dental setting², despite American Academy of Pediatrics *Bright Futures* recommendations to apply fluoride varnish to the primary teeth of all infants and children starting at the age of primary tooth eruption (as early as six months of age).³ Research shows that fluoride varnish “can prevent about 33% of cavities in the primary (baby) teeth”.⁴ Yet, only 8% of children 6 months to 5 years of age covered by Medi-Cal received dental fluoride varnish from a non-dental provider and only 11% received dental fluoride varnish from a dental provider (see Appendix A for county-level data). Managed care plans and their contracted primary care providers and clinics are critical connectors to oral health care and a dental home. MCPs, local oral health programs, dental providers, local F5s, and schools should work collectively to screen, refer, and connect children and youth to a dental home.



¹ [Dental Fee-for-Service Performance Measures Reports Fee-for-Service Statewide Performance Measures Reports by Age \(FFS CY 2021 Report\), Department of Health Care Services, 2021.](#)

² [2021 Preventive Services Report, Department of Health Care Services, June 2022.](#)

³ [Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care, Bright Futures/Academy of Pediatrics, 2022.](#)

⁴ [Children’s Oral Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2022,](#)

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OPPORTUNITY

Existing legislation and contracts already require that Medi-Cal managed care plans cover and ensure dental screenings and oral health assessments for all their members. Specifically, MCPs must ensure initial and periodic dental screenings/oral health assessments for all children and youth, as well as assist with referrals to appropriate Medi-Cal dental providers.⁵

CalAIM and new MCP contracts (starting January 1, 2024) give health plans a number of tools to identify and implement health interventions that are responsive to community needs, including oral health needs. Health plans are working to promote whole-child health services that connect kids to the right care, at the right time, in the right setting. To achieve this, MCPs are implementing population health management (PHM)⁶ programs and the new community health worker benefit⁷, among other improvements. MCPs are also increasing partnerships and collaborations with local health departments, schools, and First 5s.

RECOMMENDATION

LOHPs should engage with local MCPs to establish partnerships to advance children's oral health. Below are suggestions for how LOHPs can leverage plan requirements and new benefits in the Medi-Cal program to partner with MCPs and other local organizations.

- **Meet with your local Medi-Cal managed care health plan(s) by finding the plan(s) available in your county here:**
<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MMCDHealthPlanDir.aspx>. Many MCPs have dedicated stakeholder meetings to provide updates and obtain feedback on CalAIM implementation. Visit <https://calaimroundtables.com/> to find information for your county. If your county is not listed, reach out to your local managed care plan's CalAIM or Population Health Management point of contact.
- **Identify potential areas of collaboration to improve children's access to care and advance mutual oral health goals.** Managed care plans must meet requirements to screen and refer children to oral health care. The table below provides a non-exhaustive list of Medi-Cal benefits and plan requirements that can be leveraged to advance oral health screenings and integration across various systems and entities.

⁵ Note that for members under the age of 21, a dental screening/oral health assessment must be performed as part of every periodic assessment, with annual dental referrals made no later than 12 months of age or when referral is indicated based on assessment.

⁶ In January 2023, DHCS will launch the Population Health Management (PHM) Program, which seeks to establish a cohesive, statewide approach to all populations that brings together and expands upon many existing population health strategies. More information about the Population Health Management (PHM) Program is available here: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM/Pages/PopulationHealthManagement.aspx>

⁷ Starting July 1, 2022, community health worker services are a covered Medi-Cal benefit for all members. CHW services may address issues that include, but are not limited to, the control and prevention of chronic conditions or infectious diseases; mental health conditions and substance use disorders; need for preventive services, perinatal health conditions; sexual and reproductive health; environmental and climate-sensitive health issues; child health and development; oral health; aging; injury; domestic violence; and violence prevention. [Community Health Worker \(CHW\) Preventive Services - Medi-Cal Provider Manual, Dept. of Health Care Services, July 2022.](#)

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Medi-Cal Benefit or Requirement	Requirements of Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans	Tips for LOHPs
Oral health plan liaisons⁸	MCPs must have liaisons available to assist with referrals to covered services available through Medi-Cal dental managed care and dental fee-for-service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request the contact information and back up for the health plan’s liaison to ensure timely referrals.
Local Health Department MOUs⁹	MCPs will be required to enter into Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) - which are binding, contractual agreements – with Local Health Departments (LHDs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request the contact information for the key contacts at the MCP and at the county LHD levels to ensure that the MOUs are explicit about collaborations with LOHPs.
Develop Population Needs Assessments (PNA) in partnership and alignment with Local Health Jurisdictions’ (LHJ) Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs)	MCPs will be required to submit a PNA every three years, which will be developed by working alongside the community to gather and evaluate population-level data related to the health and social needs of their members, including cultural, linguistic, and health education needs; health disparities and inequities; and the root causes of barriers related to coverage, access, quality, health outcomes, and SDOH. MCPs will be required to develop the PNA in partnership and alignment with LHJs’ CHIPs, and hospitals’ Community Health Needs Assessments and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request the contact information for the key contacts at the MCP and at the county LHJ levels to ensure PNAs include and prioritize oral health. <input type="checkbox"/> Explore opportunities to collaborate on community engagement and data collection and sharing to improve children’s oral health.
Community health worker (CHW) benefit¹⁰	MCPs must provide CHW services to their members. MCPs submitted their CHW integration plans to DHCS for review and approval in Oct. 2022. MCPs are required to describe how they would identify populations in need of CHW services, connect members to services, inform providers about the benefit, among other details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request the MCP’s CHW integration plan and meet to discuss implementation and opportunities to partner. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer suggestions for how CHWs might be leveraged to advance oral health (e.g., screenings, referrals, linkages, etc.).
MOUs with Local Entities¹¹	Starting in 2024, MCPs will be required to enter into MOUs with First 5 programs and providers, WIC providers, and every Local Education Agency (LEA) in each county within their service area for school-based services to strengthen provision of EPSDT within schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request the MCP’s plan and timeline to establish MOUs with various local entities. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with your local First 5, LEA(s), WICs to collaborate on MOUs with MCPs to maximize coordination across county systems and programs serving children and youth.

⁸ [Assembly Bill 2207, California Legislature, 2016.](#)

⁹ View page 10 of the [Population Health Management Readiness Guide.](#)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ View page 21 of the [PHM Program Policy Guide.](#)

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<p>Closed Loop Referrals¹²</p>	<p>MCPs must meet closed loop referral requirements beginning in January 2024. Closed Loop Referrals are defined in the 2024 Re-Procurement as coordinating and referring the member to available community resources and following up to ensure services were rendered. MCPs are also required to coordinate warm handoffs with local health departments, Medi-Cal dental providers, and other public benefits programs including, but not limited to, CalWORKs and Early Start.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Identify public health department staff leading efforts to establish partnerships with MCPs. □ Meet with MCP staff (CalAIM or PHM staff) to establish closed loop referral processes. □ Provide MCPs information on effective or promising strategies to connect children to oral health care (e.g., local dental referral system, school-linked programs) and explore opportunities to scale-up programs.
<p>Topical Fluoride Varnish Metric</p>	<p>MCPs will be held to a Minimum Performance Level (MPL) standard for the Topical Fluoride Varnish (TFL-CH) metric as part of the Measurement Year (MY) 2023 Medi-Cal Accountability Set (MCAS). The Topical Fluoride Varnish (TFL-CH) metric measures the “Percentage of children aged 1 through 20 years who received at least 2 topical fluoride applications as (a) dental OR oral health services, (b) dental services, and (c) oral health services within the reporting year.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Review available data on current MCP performance on this measure and ask MCPs to share information on their efforts to increase rates (e.g., training for medical providers, leveraging Smile, California resources, data-driven strategies to increase rates, etc.). □ Request information on how the Topical Fluoride Varnish (TFL-CH) metric and other oral health metrics will be incorporated into PHM strategies to improve children’s oral health.

¹² View page 9 of the [Population Health Management Readiness Guide](#).

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Appendix A: Dental Fluoride Varnish (DFV)—County-Level Results (2020)¹³

Notes: The data represents county-level ranges in the percentage of children six months to five years of age that received one or more applications of dental fluoride varnish by a medical or dental provider. “Therefore, exercise caution when interpreting results given that only a small percentage of dental fluoride varnish applications occur in non-dental settings.”¹⁴ NA indicates the rate had a small denominator (i.e., less than 30) or small numerator (i.e., less than 11).

The shading below indicates whether a county’s level fell above (green), within range of (yellow), or below (red) the Measurement Year (MY) 2020 statewide aggregate.

County	Managed care plans in the county ¹⁵	County-level range of percentage of children (6 mos.- 5 years old) who received dental fluoride varnish from a medical or dental provider
Alameda County	Alameda Alliance for Health, Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
Alpine County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	NA
Amador County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan, Kaiser NorCal (KP Cal, LLC)	24.87%+
Butte County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	24.87%+
Calaveras County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	9.76% - 16.85%
Colusa County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	5.69% - 9.75%
Contra Costa County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, Contra Costa Health Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
Del Norte County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	Below 5.69%
El Dorado County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan, Kaiser NorCal (KP Cal, LLC)	24.87%+

¹³ [2021 Preventive Services Report, Department of Health Care Services, June 2022.](#)

¹⁴ Ibid, page 122.

¹⁵ The Dept. of Health Care Services has approved changes that will impact MCPs available in various counties effective January 1, 2024. See [Overview of Expected Changes in Medi-Cal Managed Care in 2024, Children Now, 2022.](#)

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County	Managed care plans in the county ¹⁵	County-level range of percentage of children (6 mos.- 5 years old) who received dental fluoride varnish from a medical or dental provider
Fresno County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	24.87%+
Glenn County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	9.76% - 16.85%
Humboldt County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	5.69% - 9.75%
Imperial County	California Health & Wellness Plan, Molina Healthcare of California	5.69% - 9.75%
Inyo County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	24.87%+
Kern County	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., Kern Health Systems, DBA Kern Family Health Care	9.76% - 16.85%
Kings County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, CalViva Health	Below 5.69%
Lake County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	24.87%+
Lassen County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	NA
Los Angeles County	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., L.A. Care Health Plan	9.76% - 16.85%
Madera County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, CalViva Health	24.87%+
Marin County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	Below 5.69%
Mariposa County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	5.69% - 9.75%
Mendocino County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	9.76% - 16.85%
Merced County	Central California Alliance for Health	16.86% - 24.86%
Modoc County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	NA
Mono County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	9.76% - 16.85%
Monterey County	Central California Alliance for Health	24.87%+
Napa County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	24.87%+
Nevada County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	5.69% - 9.75%

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County	Managed care plans in the county ¹⁵	County-level range of percentage of children (6 mos.- 5 years old) who received dental fluoride varnish from a medical or dental provider
Orange County	CalOptima	16.86% - 24.86%
Placer County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan, Kaiser NorCal (KP Cal, LLC)	9.76% - 16.85%
Plumas County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	Below 5.69%
Riverside County	Inland Empire Health Plan, Molina Healthcare of California	9.76% - 16.85%
Sacramento County	Aetna Better Health of California, Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., Kaiser NorCal (KP Cal, LLC), Molina Healthcare of California	16.86% - 24.86%
San Benito County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	9.76% - 16.85%
San Bernardino County	Inland Empire Health Plan, Molina Healthcare of California	16.86% - 24.86%
San Diego County	Aetna Better Health of California, Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan, Community Health Group Partnership Plan, Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., Kaiser SoCal (KP Cal, LLC), Molina Healthcare of California, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan	5.69% - 9.75%
San Francisco County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, San Francisco Health Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
San Joaquin County	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., Health Plan of San Joaquin	24.87%+
San Luis Obispo County	CenCal Health	24.87%+
San Mateo County	Health Plan of San Mateo	16.86% - 24.86%
Santa Barbara County	CenCal Health	24.87%+
Santa Clara County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, Santa Clara Family Health Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
Santa Cruz County	Central California Alliance for Health	16.86% - 24.86%
Shasta County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	5.69% - 9.75%

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County	Managed care plans in the county ¹⁵	County-level range of percentage of children (6 mos.- 5 years old) who received dental fluoride varnish from a medical or dental provider
Sierra County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	NA
Siskiyou County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	Below 5.69%
Solano County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	5.69% - 9.75%
Sonoma County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	5.69% - 9.75%
Stanislaus County	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc., Health Plan of San Joaquin	24.87%+
Sutter County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
Tehama County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	5.69% - 9.75%
Trinity County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	NA
Tulare County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	9.76% - 16.85%
Tuolumne County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	Below 5.69%
Ventura County	Gold Coast Health Plan	24.87%+
Yolo County	Partnership HealthPlan of California	5.69% - 9.75%
Yuba County	Blue Cross of California Partnership Plan, Inc., DBA Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan, California Health & Wellness Plan	16.86% - 24.86%
Statewide Aggregate	All Plans	19.35%

Additional Resources:

Children Now:

- [A Resource Guide to Medi-Cal Managed Care Monitoring and Oversight](#)
- [Children’s Medi-Cal Managed Care in California Counties](#)

Department of Health Care Services

- [Medi-Cal Managed Care Quality Improvement Reports](#)
- [Medi-Cal Dental Data Reports](#)