



Health Consumer Center (HCC): COVID-19 Updates and Resources

Last updated: June 25, 2021

As the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues, it is critical that residents and health services providers stay up to date on local, state, and federal responses to the crisis. Below you will find a list of resources designed to keep you, your loved ones, and everyone in the community safe and healthy.

CORONAVIRUS VACCINATION, TESTING, AND TREATMENT

- **Every Californian age 12 and up is now eligible for [free COVID-19 vaccination](#).**
 - Individuals can sign up at myturn.ca.gov or call (833) 422-4255 to get their COVID-19 vaccine appointment or find walk-in sites near them.
 - COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone, irrespective of residency, immigration status, or whether you have health insurance.
 - Getting the vaccine does not impact your chances of getting a green card.
- **California has also [changed its masking requirements](#).**
 - California lifted its mask requirements for vaccinated individuals starting on June 15. Vaccinated people are now able to come together without masks in most circumstances.
 - People who are unvaccinated must continue to wear a mask indoors in public settings to protect themselves and others.
 - There are some settings where masks are still required for everyone, including public transit, hospitals, long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, and indoors in K-12 schools, childcare, and other youth settings
- **Testing remains important to reducing the spread of the disease** and protecting individuals who have not been vaccinated. San Mateo County residents can obtain [free testing at a range of locations](#). California has also set up a [COVID-19 test site locator tool](#).
- **California has created a program to ensure that [people with no insurance qualify for Medi-Cal coverage for COVID-19 testing and treatment at no cost](#).** People who have private insurance that does not cover COVID-19 testing and treatment [also qualify](#). Medi-Cal beneficiaries are eligible for free COVID-19 testing and treatment even if they usually have a share of cost.
- People suffering [emotional distress](#) due to the pandemic can call the national [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at **1-800-985-5990** or San Mateo County's [ACCESS line](#) at **1-800-686-0101**.
- Anyone experiencing domestic violence can call the 24-hour national hotline at **1-800-799-7233** or **text 911**. Survivors of abuse seeking [legal advice and assistance](#) can call **1-800-551-5554**.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has announced that it will not carry out enforcement operations at or near [health facilities](#) or [vaccine sites](#) during the COVID-19 crisis except in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Individuals should seek out testing, vaccination, treatment, and preventive services without fear of immigration enforcement. California immigrants searching for additional COVID-19-related resources should see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

SAN MATEO COUNTY UPDATES AND RESOURCES

- San Mateo County **fully aligns with the state of California’s “Beyond the Blueprint”** guidance, which ended the color-coded reopening tier systems. This includes the [new guidance](#) for face coverings described above.
 - The County has rescinded its previous health orders regarding [visitation in long-term care facilities](#), [car-based gatherings](#), and [social distancing and masking](#).
 - Businesses, public agencies, and other organizations may still require face coverings, for both employees and members of the public.
 - **San Mateo County will require members of the public entering County offices or interacting with County employees to wear face coverings.** County employees will be required to wear facial coverings in alignment with Cal/OSHA’s workplace safety requirements, and the County will also continue to enforce physical distancing requirements in County offices.
- The County has published webpages regarding COVID-19 [data](#), [resources](#), [services](#) for residents and [families with children](#), [city-specific updates](#), and [scam warnings](#).
- The County continues to operate its 24-hour COVID-19 [call center](#): call **211** for non-emergency and non-medical coronavirus questions or text ‘coronavirus’ to **211211** to receive text updates.
- **The Human Services Agency (HSA) regional offices in South San Francisco, Belmont, Redwood City and Daly City have now reopened** on Monday through Friday from 9am to 11am and 1pm to 3pm.
 - Offices in East Palo Alto and San Carlos are undergoing construction and are closed for the time being.
 - Clients in East Palo Alto are being referred to the Human Service Office in Redwood City while clients in San Carlos are being taken by appointment only.
 - Residents may continue to obtain remote service by calling **1-800-223-8383** and/or e-mailing hsa_ess_questions@smcgov.org.
- **Health Plan of San Mateo (HPSM) offices remain closed for in-person visits.** Please call 1-800-750-4776 or 650-616-2133, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, or email customersupport@hpsm.org with any questions.
- **The San Mateo County Health Coverage Unit’s (HCU) offices also remain closed until further notice.** HCU is processing inquiries and insurance enrollment remotely. Please call **1-650-616-2002**, e-mail info-hcu@smcgov.org, or visit the [HCU website](#) for assistance.
 - Individuals who call HCU should leave a message with their case and contact information. HCU staff will then return the call as soon as possible.
 - Each caller will be assigned an HCU Community Health Advocate who will manage their case and assist them with their health coverage inquiry.
- **The [Great Plates Delivered Program](#), which delivered three meals per day to older residents at risk from COVID-19, is [no longer accepting applicants](#).**
 - Since federal funding for the program will end on July 9, the County is preparing a transition plan for those who remain food insecure.
 - Current Great Plates Delivered clients who remain food insecure will be directly contacted by County staff or the Second Harvest Food Bank with information about post-Great Plates Delivered options.

- Older adults who are not enrolled in Great Plates Delivered should call County Health's Aging and Adult Services helpline at (800) 675-8437 for information on other nutrition assistance. This phone number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- San Mateo County residents in need of food assistance can also visit [this page](#) to see which programs they might qualify for.
- For more on how to access essential services, please visit the Thrive Alliance's [COVID-19 page](#).
 - Workers searching for childcare should see [here](#).
 - Elderly residents seeking help with food, health care, wellness checks, housing, rental and utility assistance, translations, public benefits, applications, and more should call the [Older Adult Resource Line](#) (Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.) at **1-650-780-7542**.
- To view the County Office of Education's Pandemic Recovery Framework for Schools, see [here](#).
- To donate to individuals, families, and small businesses impacted by the crisis, and/or to non-profits helping meet vulnerable residents' needs, please visit the [San Mateo County Strong Fund](#).

CALIFORNIA UPDATES AND RESOURCES

- The Governor's office has created a [user-friendly website](#) with updates on the state's COVID-19 response. The state has also made available detailed COVID-19 [case and hospital data](#).
 - On March 18, 2020 Governor Newsom [issued an executive order](#) waiving eligibility re-determinations for 90 days for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.
 - [The moratorium on Medi-Cal redeterminations, discontinuances, and negative actions has since been extended through the end of the Public Health Emergency](#) and remains in place as of this time.
 - On March 27, 2020, the Governor issued a statewide eviction moratorium to protect renters impacted by COVID-19.
 - That [moratorium was recently extended through September 30, 2021](#).
 - For more information on COVID-19 tenant protections in San Mateo County, please visit [this webpage](#).
 - On May 22, 2020, the Governor [launched California Connected](#), a comprehensive contact tracing program and public awareness campaign designed to slow the spread of the virus.
 - On December 20, 2020, the Governor released the [State Safe Schools for All plan](#), California's framework to support schools to continue operating safely in-person and to expand the number of schools safely resuming in-person instruction. For the latest information on school reopening, please visit the [CA Safe Schools for All Hub](#).
 - On February 23, 2021, the Governor signed into law [a package of actions designed to speed relief to individuals, families, and businesses suffering due to COVID-19](#).
 - The package provided \$600 in one-time relief to households receiving the California EITC for 2020; taxpayers with Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs) who were precluded from receiving the \$1,200 per person federal payments issued last spring and the more recent \$600 federal payments; households with ITINs and income below \$75,000; households enrolled in the CalWORKS program; recipients of SSI/SSP; and recipients of the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).

- The package also provided \$2.1 billion for grants up to \$25,000 for small businesses impacted by the pandemic.
 - On May 14, 2021, the Governor unveiled a [\\$100 billion spending proposal](#) intended to promote California’s economic recovery.
 - On May 20, 2021, the Governor announced the launch of a new [Employer Vaccination Toolkit](#), which will ease the process for employers to request a workplace clinic or local provider partner, making COVID-19 vaccines even more accessible for their employees.
 - The Governor has further issued orders to help [small businesses and workers](#); expedite COVID-19 [response funding](#); [prevent water shut-offs](#); [expand tele-health services](#); [protect student loan borrowers](#) and [consumers](#); [protect foster youth](#); [provide childcare](#) to essential workers; [help parents find childcare](#); [support the elderly](#); [expand paid sick leave](#); [help the homeless](#); increase access to [medications](#) and [medical devices](#); [enhance the state’s stockpile of respirators and masks](#); and [streamline unemployment benefits](#).
- California’s Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) have created their own COVID-19 webpages.
 - The [CDPH webpage](#) includes a news feed, FAQs about the disease, and [guidance](#).
 - The [DHCS webpage](#) contains further guidance for health providers, partners, and beneficiaries, including [Medi-Cal members](#).
- DHCS has issued a letter to Medi-Cal beneficiaries with [important COVID-19 information and FAQs](#).
- DHCS is [waiving premium payments throughout the Public Health Emergency](#) for the Medi-Cal Access Program (MCAP), the Optional Targeted Low-Income Children’s Program (OTLICP), the Medi-Cal Access Infant Program (MCAIP), the Children’s Health Initiative Program (CCHIP), and the 250% Working Disabled Program (WDP).
 - Members must call one of these numbers to tell Medi-Cal that they cannot make their payments due to a COVID-19 hardship and ask for a waiver:
 - **MCAP – 1-800-433-2611;**
 - **OTLICP and MCAIP – 1-800-880-5305;**
 - **CCHIP – 1-833-912-2447;**
 - **WDP – 1-916-445-9891.**
 - WDP members and their authorized representatives may also [request a waiver online](#).
- Effective December 1, 2020, California [increased the income limit for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled Federal Poverty program](#) and implemented reforms to [prevent low-income beneficiaries from losing free Medi-Cal just because the state started paying their Medicare Part B premiums](#).
- California has obtained an [1135 waiver](#) from the federal government to [more effectively provide care to Medi-Cal recipients](#), including by increasing the time Medi-Cal managed plan members have to file a [State Fair Hearing Request](#) to [240 days](#).
- In general, the deadline for an individual to request a Medi-Cal fair hearing is extended to [210 days after the date of their notice](#).
 - All state hearings are [taking place by phone](#) until further notice.
 - However, claimants still have a right to an in-person hearing if they want one.
- The state has also created a **24/7 “Medi-Nurse” line (1-877-409-9052)** for Medi-Cal patients with no health plan and uninsured Californians who have concerns about COVID-19 or other issues.

- In response to the COVID-19 crisis, [Covered California has re-opened enrollment until the end of 2021 and is offering increased financial assistance to consumers.](#)
 - The American Rescue Plan provides new and expanded financial help to people who receive their health insurance through an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, like Covered California.
 - The law ensures that everyone eligible will pay no more than 8.5 percent of their household income on their health care premiums.
 - The American Rescue Plan provides additional Advance Premium Tax Credit (APTC) and Cost-Sharing Reductions (CSR) for eligible consumers who receive unemployment insurance benefits (UIB) during 2021. Consumers who report receiving UIB for any week in 2021 will be determined for APTC and CSR at 138.1% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
 - Consumers who report receiving UIB for any week in 2021 will have their plans automatically updated to Silver 94 plans and qualify for a monthly premium at a cost of \$1 per person per month for the benchmark Silver plan available to them. Please note, however, that consumers must either already be enrolled in a Silver plan or must change their plan to a Silver plan in order to receive the additional CSR benefit.
 - Consumers should visit www.coveredca.com/get-started to apply for coverage.
- California participated in the [Pandemic EBT program](#) to provide food benefits to help families with young children (aged 0-6) who got CalFresh Food benefits between October 2020 and May 2021 and school age children who were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals through the federal School Breakfast or National School Lunch Program for School Year 2020-21, and who were assumed to have attended school via distance learning at least some of that time.
 - PEBT 2.0 cards (covering the period between October 1, 2020 and May 31, 2021) for eligible young children will be automatically mailed beginning early July 2021 through August 2021
 - P-EBT 2.0 cards for eligible school age children will be automatically mailed beginning early August 2021 through November 2021.
 - Cards will be mailed by age group in alphabetical order based on the first name of the eligible child.
 - Recently, Congress extended P-EBT through the summer of 2021. If California is approved to provide Summer P-EBT benefits, eligible children will receive a standard Summer P-EBT benefit of \$375, which will be reloaded on their existing P-EBT 2.0 card.
 - **Families that have already received a P-EBT card and need assistance with PIN set-up, need to request a replacement card, or did not receive their card in the mail as expected, may contact the P-EBT Helpline at (877) 328-9677 for help.**
 - **Families that have not received a P-EBT card but have questions about their P-EBT eligibility can also contact the P-EBT Helpline at (877) 328-9677.**
- California also [temporarily increased CalFresh benefits by 15% from January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021.](#)
 - These supplemental benefits were issued starting February 14.
 - Please note that CalFresh recipients may use their benefits to [buy groceries online](#) at Walmart and Amazon. Those who spend \$35 or more will get free delivery. For more information, please see [here](#).

- For more information on how to access health services in California, please visit the [Health Consumer Alliance's COVID-19 information page](#).
- If you are a health professional interested in relieving pressure on the state's health system by fighting the COVID-19 outbreak, please consider joining the [California Health Corps](#).
- To help in other ways, please visit the [Californians for All Volunteer Service Initiative](#).

FEDERAL UPDATES AND RESOURCES

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has established a [COVID-19 website](#) with [information](#) on how people can get [vaccinated](#) and protect themselves from the virus; the pandemic's impact on travel, schools, and employment; and the outbreak's progression. The CDC has also posted [guidance](#) and resources for [public health departments](#), [health facilities](#), and [services providers](#) and [banned evictions during the pandemic](#) (without offering rental assistance or relieving tenants of their obligation to pay rent).
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has similarly published a [webpage](#) aggregating its COVID-19 resources.
- The Social Security Administration (SSA) has [modified several policies](#) during this time.
 - SSA has suspended most in-person services in its field and hearing offices nationwide.
 - SSA can still be reached [online](#) or [by phone](#) at **1-800-772-1213** (main), **1-888-748-7702** (Daly City), **1-866-726-8193** (San Mateo), or **1-888-860-5582** (Redwood City).
 - Please be aware that you may need to wait to reach an agent.
 - SSA will schedule an in-person appointments in limited, critical situations. Limited, critical situations exist when a person is:
 - Without food or shelter, including utilities or are without medical care or coverage and needs to apply for or reinstate benefits.
 - Currently receiving benefits and has an urgent need for payment to meet expenses for food, shelter, or medical treatment, and cannot receive the payment electronically.
 - SSA is applying its good cause policy and extending deadlines with maximum flexibility.
 - SSA will be conducting phone and video hearings until further notice. A postponement will be granted to anyone who declines a phone or video hearing.
- Congress has responded to the COVID-19 crisis in several ways.
 - On March 18, it enacted [legislation](#) expanding emergency paid sick leave, family and medical leave, unemployment assistance, food aid, and Medicaid funding.
 - On March 27, it passed a [\\$2 trillion stimulus package](#) that guaranteed, among other support, four months of expanded unemployment insurance and a one-time \$1,200 check (and an additional \$500 per child) to most adults making \$75,000 a year or less.
 - [On December 27, an additional \\$900 billion COVID-19 relief package was signed into law.](#) The package included Economic Impact Payments of \$600 per individual with an income at or below \$75,000 (or \$1,200 per couple with an income at or below \$150,000).
 - [On March 11, President Biden signed into law The American Rescue Plan, an additional \\$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package.](#)
 - The White House has published a [website](#) explaining what is in the legislation.

- The bill included [\\$1,400 stimulus checks](#) to most Americans.
 - Full checks went out to single people making up to \$75,000 and couples making up to \$150,000, and phased out at \$80,000 and \$160,000, based on 2019 or 2020 tax returns, depending on when people last filed their taxes.
 - The legislation included checks for adult dependents, such as college students and people with disabilities, for the first time.
- The legislation also included expanded and extended unemployment insurance through September 6, with unemployed workers receiving an extra \$300 a week in federal benefits, and a significant expansion in the child tax credit.
- For more information about Economic Impact Payments, please visit this [IRS webpage](#).